The Occult Underground

James Webb

The Occult Underground
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Preface

IT is probable that the material surveyed in this book has been ignored because of its intellectual unrespectability. The "occult" has not formed part of the overt concerns of members of the academic fraternity. Any writer on the subject from outside these cloistered courts runs the risk of being branded partial—not, it should be said, without justification. It is my case that this quite natural state of affairs has led to a partial view of history; that to ignore the occult revival of the 19th century is to ignore a large slice of modern intellectual

development; and that the proper understanding of the workings of the occult mind explains much which has been puzzling commentators on the history of the last fifty years as well. In particular such an understanding can make easier the journey into the "mind-set" employed by the romantic revolutionaries of today—the hippies, community-dwellers, the Movement, the Underground. The reader will discover the terms "Underground" and "Establishment" used throughout this book to describe cultural groupings very much earlier than those of the 20th century. It seems to me amazing that no historian has so far extended the terminology of the self-proclaimed Underground back in time to discover whether a historical continuity exists. I did not start in this fashion; but was drawn to using the terms through trying to answer a question now discussed in Chapter Four of the second volume, *The Occult Establishment*. The dichotomy of Underground and Establishment is one of the most important concepts to have emerged from recent social changes.

Now, it would be perfectly possible to write a history of ideas taking as the criterion of final importance some totally ignored standard such as the wearing of odd socks—that is, supposing the information to be available. In this way, an unknown if eccentric parish priest might be made to appear the center of an entire school of "odd-socks wearers." But at any given time there is a measure of consensus as to what are the more interesting or admirable activities of mankind. This comprises a critical Establishment, itself an interesting index to otherwise largely unimaginable "climates of opinion." The occult has be excluded from the Establishment consensus of what is finally "relevant," and relegated to the Niflheim of odd-socks wearers. But it is the very nature of the occult that it cannot exist except in opposition to and interrelation with that critical Establishment. It has therefore been part of my task to maintain that the occult is "important" and "relevant" to the aspirations of mankind; further, that it is worth study in its own right.

As to the question of "significance" in the history of ideas: a thinker may be significant in a number of ways. He

may be a man of his time, an expert receiver and transmitter of a hypothetical *Zeitgeist*. He may himself be an original thinker, whose ideas are immediately relevant to current problems. He may also exercise an influence over an extended period of time—either his ideas stimulate others to produce ideas of their own, or themselves meet a fortunate tide in affairs and are borne along on its crest.

There is also another thinker of significance, neither a man of his time nor an influence on minds or society. This is the individual whose concerns seem suddenly relevant to the problems of a later age, although in his own time he may have been ignored and subsequently forgotten. The neglected genius is a familiar figure of mythology; but there are also neglected lunatics who are worthy of study. Thus, we might now discover—had history moved in that direction—that the wearer of odd socks had been practicing some "significant" form of social rebellion. Even on these grounds the occult should have received better treatment than it has so far encountered. The fact that occultists are often delightfully eccentric should not blind the enquirer to the existence of the occasional great man: the dedication even of camp-followers has never been examined. This study is an attempt to repair some of these omissions.

I owe thanks to the librarians and staffs of the University Library, Cambridge; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the British Museum; the National Library of Scotland; the London Library; the Warburg Institute, University of London; and to Mr. Wesencraft of the Harry Price Library, the Senate House, University of London.

To the Master of St. Benet's Hall, Oxford, Mgr. Alfred Gilbey, Prince Tomohito of Mikasa, John Patten, William and David Allen, and Robert Bailey-King I am indebted for hospitality, encouragement, and suggestions.

The expert knowledge of Miss Kathleen Raine on matters of Traditional thought has here been as unavoidably simplified and distorted as it was freely given.

To the extraordinary knowledge and generous temperament of Francis King I am very much in debt: his detailed

acquaintanceship with matters occult was placed unstintingly at my service.

Without the continued encouragement, hospitality, and readiness to part with hard-won information shown by Ellic Howe this book would never have been written; or written in so partial a form that it could make no claim to survey those neglected areas of 19th-century thought known so well to Mr. Howe.

It need hardly be said that none of those who have so willingly proffered help is responsible for any errors or aberrations of my own.

Bibliographical Note

There would be little point in listing every book used in the writing of this study; and two reasons make it difficult to provide a short classified bibliography following normal practice. The first is that I consider the most useful categories to be already defined by my chapter-headings; and the second, that the extremes of bias which are a common feature of occult literature make general recommendations unwise. Therefore, to print a list of books on "Rosicrucianism" or "alchemy" would not only duplicate what has already been done—see, in particular, A. L. Caillet, *Manuel bibliographique des sciences psychiques* (Paris, 3 vols., 1912)—but run the risk of seeming to support erroneous, and sometimes lunatic, opinion. The notes which follow are thus a combination of bibliography and reference. Bearing in mind the dangers inherent in dealing with occult source-material, a reference to a book is in no way meant to endorse its opinions or indeed any part of the work other than that specifically indicated.

Introduction

The Flight from Reason

AFTER the Age of Reason came the Age of the Irrational. It has yet to be trapped, dissected, and pronounced upon. The fact that it is with us here and now is daily announced by the pundits; but no one has bothered to anatomize the beast historically. The label, like all historical labels—and all tags hung round the necks of apocalyptic Beasts—has only a limited use. If it serves to indicate that the period has been in certain aspects one of reaction against the logical consequences of too much logic,

it serves its purpose well. It is of as much use as the Age of Reason which went before it; and subject to the same qualifications. For the century of Enlightenment was also the century of shadows. In the time of the encyclopaedists there flourished alchemists and disciples of Jacob Boehme, whilst the belief of astrologers in lunar influence has survived the physical presence of man on the moon. Indeed there is no good reason why it should not.

The abandonment of Reason has been an irregular process. Sections of the populations of Europe and America have been afflicted by various forms of anxiety at different times. However, it is not arbitrary to define a period of great uncertainty extending roughly from the downfall of Napoleon to the outbreak of the First World War. Men's responses have been multiform. The response of those whose chief education had been found in the pages of the family Bible was different from that of the sophisticated upper classes of European capitals; and London differed from Paris as London has always differed from Paris. There is, nevertheless, evidence that Western man as a whole was undergoing a severe trial of his capacity to adapt to an environment which for the first time seemed beyond his powers to order. This is ironic, as it is common knowledge that the achievements of the Industrial Revolution and the development of scientific methods of enquiry had at last begun to put mankind in some sort of a commanding position over the physical world. But as man advanced to greater mastery of the physical, so his always precarious hold began to slip upon the more intangible aspects of his relationship with the universe. His society, his awareness, his methods of thought, and most importantly the conclusions he reached, were all changing round him. What is more, they could be seen to be changing; and this was frightening.

The chief agents of the metamorphosis have all been described as "revolutions." The development of an industrial technology; the application of analytical method to the natural world; the threatened changes in forms of

government and the rising clamor of the poor; even the self-dramatizing attitude known as Romanticism; can all be seen as revolutionary changes. Add to these factors the increasing contact of Europeans with the peoples of Asia, and it is clear that Western man's estimation of himself and his place in the world required some drastic revision. The Industrial Revolution reconstructed the European economy. Man's relations with man were altered; the distribution of population changed; communications improved so that news became not merely of parochial interest; and the very geographical barriers to speedy travel began to disappear. The scientific method resulted in Darwin's theory of evolution and the application of critical standards to accepted notions of history and religion, by people like Ernest Renan and David Strauss. Ever since 1789 the threat of social revolution had terrified the guiltier consciences of Europe. In the short but significant upheavals of 1848 over fifty violent attempts took place to topple established governments. The Romantic attitude placed a weight of significance on the individual which not everyone was prepared to accept. What was happening was the final collapse of the old world-order which had first been rudely assaulted during the Renaissance and the Reformation.

In the earlier period ideas of duty to God and King had given way to a recognition of secular standards and the pursuit of profit. During the 18th century there gradually developed an attitude of mind which enabled man to pursue with more success his worldly activities. In its extreme form this became Rationalism, and the Age of Reason was characterized if not by a devotion to the things of this world, at any rate by a neglect of things belonging to another. The Industrial, Social, Scientific and Romantic revolutions were all, in one way or another, the outcome of this concentration. But just when the Age of Reason seemed to be bearing fruit in the 19th century, there was an unexpected reaction against the very method which had brought success, a wild return to archaic forms of belief, and among

the intelligentsia a sinister concentration on superstitions which had been thought buried. So it might have appeared to a disheartened Rationalist.

If it is true that to write a history proves that the subject of discussion has become pretty lifeless, Reason died sometime before 1865. In that year William Lecky published his *History of Rationalism,* a compendium of enlightened Victoriana concerned largely with the elimination of "superstition" and the growth of humanitarian ideals. Witches are no longer burned, the slaves are emancipated, rejoices Lecky, and invites his readers to join him in celebrating the "progress" of the Western world. Although rationalism had led to other things than the victory of humanitarian principles, to a certain extent Lecky was able to distinguish a mode of thinking for what it was. This argues a clear perception of what went before; but also a recognition of the dangers of the present. Lecky knew all too well the difficulties of persuading others to accept the truths of sweet reason.

> The immense majority either never examine the opinions they have inherited, or examine them so completely under the dominating influence of the principle of education that whatever may have been the doctrines they have been taught, they conclude that they are so unquestionably true, that nothing but a judicial blindness can cause their rejection. Of the few who have obtained a glimpse of higher things, a large proportion cannot endure a conflict to which old associations and, above all, the old doctrine of the guilt of error, lend such a peculiar bitterness; they stifle the voice of reason, they turn away from the path of knowledge, they purchase peace at the expense of truth. This is, indeed, in our day the most fatal of obstacles to enquiry.[1]

This stifling of the voice of reason could lead to a straightforward return to old ways of thought and old methods of doing things. But such escapism became increasingly difficult. In 1859 Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published, and the great battle broke out between the evolutionists and those who still asserted the literal truth of

the account of Creation given in Genesis. Meanwhile, the historians were doing their best to destroy the notion of the New Testament as unchallengeable narrative. Renan's *Life of Jesus* appeared two years before Lecky's *History.* Nothing previously held as sacred and immune from tampering could escape the criticism of the scientific method. Thus, for the more thoughtful a simple return to the comforts of Christianity was unsatisfactory—although such a return was widespread. For religion saw the new science as an enemy. It was.[2] To Christianity as understood in the early 19th century the new theories about man and the universe spelled total disaster if not contained within set limits. To some doubters such conflict brought a dark night of the soul in which the freedom of man from divine ordering seemed a true and very terrible thing.

It is often stated that the influence of Darwin and the new scientists had little effect on the faith of ordinary people. In time, however, the new ideas were assimilated and diffused. Anyway it has been observed that all the elements necessary to the evolutionary theory were present before Darwin's flash of intuition that placed each component in the right slot. The *Origin of Species* was a codification and the focus of dispute, but "many had obscurely felt" what Darwin stated openly.[3] And it was not only the efforts of Darwin and a few intellectuals that threatened to take away from man his few illusions of security. Much more potent, because practically observable, were the effects of the Industrial Revolution and social agitation. If the findings of the scientists meant for the thinking classes the destruction of intellectual securities, alterations in the means of production and consumption were establishing a new form of society altogether, one in which the bases of wealth and security were not known from experience and which was therefore threatening. Among the classes deprived of the means of politically regulating their own destiny, the campaign for a say in the government of their countries gathered momentum with the demand from the worst-off for a more just distribution of the world's goods. Security,

mental, physical, financial, and spiritual, seemed menaced on every side. In order to live a tolerable life, some form of mental adjustment had to be made. This book is often concerned with those who failed to make the transition. But it is as well to note that the forces of social "progress" were by no means immune from the widespread anxiety about the future of man.

The condition was aggravated—particularly for the artistic and literary worlds—by the attitudes instilled by Romanticism. The word "Romantic" has been so defined and redefined that I do not propose to enter into the game. But two characteristics of Romanticism are important from the point of view of this book; one a popular, the other a scholarly definition. "Romantic" in everyday speech means something unreal, pleasant, and dramatic. One characteristic of the movement known by academics as Romanticism is concentration on the self. The popular idea of something Romantic as a pleasurable form of escapism results from this concentration on the self. By and large the opinion of the Age of Reason was that the universe revolved round man. At any rate man was the perceptible center of things, and an extremely important part of creation. Therefore, all his acts, his passions, his minutest doings must be invested with an awesome significance, as the dramatic activities of the lord of the world. This reasoning was all very well, but it placed on the individual an enormous burden in exchange for his privileged position at the center of things. Man was left to himself. He had only his own kind to turn to. From this "homocentric" vision of the universe resulted the idea of the Romantic as a dreamer, an unrealist. The overloaded personality might break down under the strain of its own existence; pure escapism might be the result, at best a heightened and hysterical insistence on the overwhelming importance of one's every action.

In the middle of the 19th century it happened that the consciousness of changes in society combined with intellectual and artistic positions to produce a widespread flight

from reason, whose findings appeared intolerable to the dignity of man, and insupportable to his knowledge of himself. This I have called the "crisis of consciousness." The motive was not petulance with humanity's perhaps insignificant place in the cosmos, but simple fear. A sense of insecurity was made worse by the need to accept personal responsibility in the society which was evolving. Under God, or in a hierarchically-structured society, the individual had been spared the necessity of making decisions in the frightening knowledge of the limitless degree of freedom which he possessed. Of course, there were always practical restrictions on what could and what could not be done. But the knowledge that one is the arbiter of one's own destiny is always a frightening discovery; and during the 19th century whole peoples began to realize the extent of that fear. Erich Fromm has described some of the symptoms of such a withdrawal from the prospect of freedom;[4] but it seems as though historians have neglected the theories of the psychologists as being outside their province.

In circumstances of anxiety and uncertainty, superstition is likely to make a prominent showing. This is seen as perhaps a regression to infantile attitudes, or to beliefs acquired early in life and afterwards suppressed; or perhaps as a means of obtaining some sort of illusory control over a frightening situation.[5] During the 19th-century crisis of consciousness this sort of situation was the order of the day; and superstition flourished. The most interesting facet of the flight from reason is the revival of the occult. Under this widely misunderstood heading are grouped an astonishing collection of subjects: hypnotism, magic, astrology, water-divining, "secret" societies, and a multitude of similar topics of doubtful intellectual respectability. The discovery of the real nature of the occult makes possible a view of history and society which I believe is new. But this book is neither a complete history of the occult revival nor an attempt to compile an intellectual history of the last century and a half. Both would be superhuman tasks. It is rather an

attempt to show how the occult revival can be used as a key to a crisis which we still have not resolved, and how the occult relates to the better-lit regions of society.

To understand this, one thing should be noted about the expression of ideas. In terms of man's vision of himself and his place in the world, a real free-thinker is always a very rare bird. In the mid-19th century one was for Revolution or Reaction, Progress or Order. Likewise, there was an over-limited conceptual vocabulary to allow of great sophistication in most people's way of looking at the world. The terms with which man was most familiar—and probably the terms with which he is still most at home—to describe his thoughts about his relationship with the universe were religious or directly anti-religious. Thus it should not be surprising to hear the prophet of a socialist paradise express himself in nearly religious fashion; particularly if the boiling of social discontents is borne in mind as a constant background to the crisis and its development. On the one hand, the furnace of the revolution; on the other, the blackness of the void. God was dying, but Nietzsche had not yet officially erected his tombstone. 1848 was the year of revolutions in Europe; it also represents the beginning of Spiritualism in America. We shall find that the religious and the political, the occult and the revolutionary, run in the same paths, employ each other's language. Western society was disoriented and dismayed in the midst of its riches. Corporately it behaved rather like the irresolute Rationalist described in Lecky's fulsome prose:

> There is a period in the history of the enquirer when old opinions have been shaken or destroyed, and new opinions have not yet been formed, a period of doubt, of terror, and of darkness, when the voice of the dogmatist has not lost its power, and the phantoms of the past still hover over the mind, a period when every landmark is lost to sight, and every star is veiled, and the soul seems drifting helpless and rudderless before the destroying blast. It is in this season of transition that the temptations to stifle reason possess a fearful power.[6]

1. W.E.H. Lecky, *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe* (London, 1870), vol. II, 4th edition, pp. 94-5.

2. Despite the assertions to the contrary of so many clerics. For a good example of the believed dichotomy see Andrew D. White, *A History of the Warfare of Science and Theology in Christendom* (London, 1875, reprinted 1955). Time and compromise have proved that there is perhaps nothing inherently incompatible in Christianity and, say, evolutionary theory; and it is also true that not every observer in the 19th century saw the opposition of the new science and the old religion in terms of black and white—see C. C. Gillispie, *Genesis and Geology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951)—but it cannot be disputed that the challenge posed by empirical investigation to revealed truth maintained in dogmatic form was of the severest kind.

3. Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution*, (London, 1959), p. 377; *cf.* also Herbert Butterfield, *Origins of Modern Science* (London, 1957), p. 233.

4. Erich Fromm, *Fear of Freedom* (London, paperback reprint, 1960, of original 1942 edition).

5. Gustav Jahoda, *The Psychology of Superstition* (London, 1969), p. 146.

6. Lecky, *Rationalism*, vol. II, pp. 95-6.

Chapter 1
The Necromancers

THE gods came down to earth again on 31 March 1848. The site of their appearance was outwardly not propitious, but quite within the traditions of proselytizing divinity. It was a small, wooden cottage at Hydesville, Arcadia, near New York. The cottage consisted of one story, an attic above, and a cellar below.[1] But, as one ardent protagonist of the Spiritualist revelation wrote:

> The humble frame dwelling at Hydesville looms up into the proportions of a gigantic temple whose foundations are laid in the four corners of the earth, and the rough and rugged path which the bleeding feet of the Hydesville mediums seemed doomed to tread amidst tears, shudderings and nameless horror, has now loomed out into the splendid proportions of the bridge which arches over the awful chasm of the grave, affording a transit for millions of aspiring souls into the glorious realities of eternity . . .[2]

Before such a gale of feminine conviction, one can but bow gracefully and investigate the grounds for belief.

At the time the spirits appeared, the house had been tenanted for three and a half months by a family named Fox. During the whole of the last fortnight in March, so they afterwards testified, they had been troubled by a mysterious rapping which shook tables and chairs. This is the evidence of Mrs. Margaret Fox:

> We went to bed early, because we had been broken so much of our rest that I was almost sick.
>
> My husband had just gone to bed when we first heard the noises this evening. I had just laid down when it commenced as usual. I knew it from all the other noises I had ever heard in the house. The girls, who slept in the other bed in the room, heard the noise and tried to make a similar noise by snapping their fingers. The youngest girl is about twelve years old. She is the one who made her hand go. As fast as she made the noises with her hands or fingers, the sounds followed up in the room. It did not sound different at that time, but it made the same number of raps the girls did. When she stopped, the sounds would stop for a short time. The other girl, who is in her fifteenth year, then spoke in sport, and said, "Now do just as I do. Count one, two, three, four, etc.," at the same time striking one hand in the other.
>
> The blows which she made were repeated as before. It appeared to answer her by repeating every blow she made. She only did it once. She then began to be startled, and I said to the noise, "Count ten," and it made ten strokes or noises. Then I asked the ages of my different children successively, and it gave the number of raps corresponding to the ages of each of my children.

> I then asked it if it was a human being making the noise, and if so, to manifest it by the same noise. There was no noise. I then asked it if it was a spirit?—if it was, to manifest it by two sounds. I heard two sounds as soon as the words were spoken.[3]

Such is the "official" narrative of how communication was established between the spirit world and the world of living beings. If the homely utterances of Mrs. Fox do not seem to carry much conviction today, we should not be surprised that the movement spread. People *wanted* to believe; and no religion could give the consolation or assurance of personal integrity that "proof" of survival after death could bring. The Hydesville mediumship was catching. Shortly after the initial incident, Maggie Fox went to stay at Rochester, New York, with her married sister, and Kate Fox went to Auburn. At both these places the rappings broke out. The married Fox girl discovered that she too was mediumistic, and by 1851 it was estimated that there were 100 mediums in New York City alone.[4]

The first phase of Spiritualism reached its climax with the presentation to Congress of a petition requesting the setting up of a scientific commission to investigate the phenomena. Attached were 1,300 signatures, including that of an ex-governor of Wisconsin, and Senator James Shields made a long and ambiguous speech interlarded with references to Cornelius Agrippa, Cagliostro, and Dr. Dee. "This speech," says the record, "was listened to with much attention, but frequently interrupted by laughter."

> *Mr. Weller:* What does the Senator propose to do with the petition?
>
> *Mr. Pettit::* Let it be referred to the three thousand clergymen (Laughter).
>
> *Mr. Weller:* I suggest that it be referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations (Laughter).[5]

The hard-headed senators shelved the petition. There had already been vociferous criticism of the Fox sisters, in particular by three university professors from Buffalo, who had discovered that if the girls' feet were placed so that they could not move their knee-joints, the "phenomena"

ceased.[6] As early as the winter of 1850, a certain Dr. Potts, while lecturing to a literary club on the stage of the Corinthian Hall, Rochester, scene of the Spiritualists' first triumphal meeting, had delighted his audience by cracking his toes to prove that he too could produce rappings.[7] In April 1851, a Mrs. Norman Culver signed a statement, afterwards published in the *New York Herald*, that the Foxes had admitted to her that they had produced the noise by cracking their joints.[8]

Finally, in 1888, Maggie broke down and confessed. She gave "séances" on stage before large audiences, showing how the rappings had been produced. Her incredulous sister wrote, "They made $150,000 clear."[9] More, it seemed, could be made out of exposures than out of the séances themselves. The tricks of two mischievous children had got completely out of hand; and had not America been filled with people begging for a revelation which was scientifically demonstrable, the deception would have been buried in Hydesville, where it began. The spirit who had originally contacted the girls was supposed to have been that of a murdered peddler whose grave lay under the Fox house. Excavations produced some teeth and bones, dubiously human.[10]

To at least one of those in the secret, the morality of the proceedings had become dreadfully muddled. Elisha Kent Kane, the Arctic explorer, became infatuated with Maggie Fox, whom he married a short while before his death. Once he wrote to her:

> When I think of you, dear darling, wasting your time, youth and conscience for a few paltry dollars, and think of the crowds who come nightly to hear the wild stories of the frigid North, I sometimes feel that we are not so far removed after all. My brain and your body are each the sources of attraction, and I confess that there is not so much difference.[11]

Kane was not far wrong. His tales of Arctic adventure filled a need for escapist fantasy; in a way, so did the bogus séances. The far-away world of the polar ice-cap was no nearer the audiences to whom Kane lectured in New York

than the "Summer-Land" of the spirits. In one aspect, Spiritualism can be seen as pure wish-fulfillment, for despite confessions and exposures the faith of the converts held secure. The tenacity with which the early Spiritualists guarded their dream is well illustrated by the attitude adopted by *Light*, the London Spiritualist paper, on first receiving the news of the Fox confession. "Mrs. Jencken" (Kate Fox), it wrote, "has for a long time been victim to a deplorable habit which has apparently destroyed her moral consciousness, and rendered anything she may say or do unworthy of attention."[12] Even more incredible is the statement by Algernon Joy, Secretary of the British National Union of Spiritualists, concerning the notorious exposés of séance-faking given by the conjurors Maskelyne and Cook at the Egyptian Hall in London. He declared that the performers had developed into the finest mediums in the world "for strong physical manifestations."[13]

Spiritualist phenomena soon progressed beyond mere table-rapping. The most famous of all mediums, Daniel Dunglas Home, who displayed his talents before the Tsar (he was expelled from Rome on the orders of the Vatican, but eventually died a Catholic) was observed by Lord Adare, the Master of Lindsay, and a gentleman called Charles Wynn, to float out of a third-floor window at 5 Buckingham Gate, and back in through another seven feet away.[14] On another occasion, wrote Lord Adare:

> Partially covering himself with the window curtains, but holding the glass with the brandy in it above his head, between us and the window so that we could see it, he was lifted off the floor about four or five feet. While in the air, we saw a bright light in the glass; presently he came down and showed us that the glass was empty, by turning it upside down; he also came to us, turned it upside down upon our hands; then going back to the window he held the glass up and we heard the liquid drop into it. He began talking about the brandy, and said, "It is under certain circumstances a demon, a real devil, but, if properly used, it is most beneficial." As he said this the light became visible in the glass, and he was again raised in the air; "But,"

> he said, "if improperly used, it becomes *so*" (the light disappeared) "and drags you down, down, lower and lower" and as he spoke he sank gradually down till he touched the floor with the glass. He again raised the glass above his head, and the liquor fell over and through my fingers into the glass, dropping from the air above me . . .[15]

No conjuror would have difficulty in recognizing a nice line in patter—the slow descent of Home symbolizing the fall into drunkenness; and under the right conditions, most of these feats could be duplicated. After the spectacular stage performances of the Davenport Brothers[16] "Ghost Shows" became very popular as a branch of conjuring, and much attention has been devoted to duplicating the phenomena of the séance-room.[17] In 1891 a repentent "medium" published his *Revelations*, which contain among other secrets a method for performing one of Home's other feats that of handling hot coals and bathing his face in the fire.[18]

It is fair to say that if Home was a conjuror, he was a very good one. Most of his competitors did little better than arrange for guitars and candlesticks to fly about in a totally darkened room. The raps, of course, continued to be heard. From the very early days spirits had "materialized" themselves, forming a visible body from the mysterious substance, "ectoplasm," produced by the medium. The "direct voice" séance, at which the medium went into a trance and purported to speak with the voice of a dead person, was another innovation. But few professional mediums have escaped without at least one exposure for cheating. Home himself was convicted in the courts of having used "spirit voices" to cozen some £24,000 from a Mrs. Lyon.[19] The argument of the Spiritualists that one exposure does not invalidate one hundred cases of evidence of survival transmitted through mediums is unanswerable. But the crucial fact is this—that with all the evidence to the contrary, with scoffers on every hand, people believed implicitly in the Spiritualist revelation.

It is relatively simple to decide what motives influenced the fraudulent mediums. The almost unanimous reply of

the early critics was "money." This is probably only half the story. Like the Foxes, the Davenports sprang from humble origins. For those whose social position was not quite what they could wish; for those who were unsure of making their way according to the standards of conventional society; or for those who felt in any way insecure, the spiritualist movement formed a closed circle within which they could demonstrate their essential worthiness. Any cult performs for its members the function of status-giving, or "making them feel important."[20] How much more so Spiritualism, if the devotee "discovers" himself to have mediumistic powers. It is simply unrealistic to play the moralist in these matters; for the line between self-deception and deliberate fraud is so delicately drawn as almost to seem invisible.

Sincere or fraudulent, however, the early mediums found the terrain well prepared. Their success would never have attained its remarkable proportions but for the efforts of three men: a Swedish engineer turned prophet, an Austrian physician branded unacceptable by the world of learning, and a young American good-for-nothing who took to seeing visions.

The prophet was Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). His conversations with angels and spirits led him to publish the weighty *Arcana Coelestia* in London, in 1749. It had a discouraging reception: only two copies were sold in the first two months.[21] But gradually Swedenborg acquired a reputation which, although at first limited, was ten years after his death consolidated in a church. Starting from its chapel in East Cheap, the Church of the New Jerusalem extended its influence into Europe and—most importantly from the point of view of Spiritualism—into the United States. By 1828, the tenth General Convention of the American New Church reported eighty places where the true doctrine was taught, as opposed to the bare forty-nine congregations claimed next year for Britain, where the gospel had first seen the light.[22]

Since 1736 Swedenborg had experienced mystical states: supernatural flashes of light and other manifestations assaulted his inner eye. His bent for mystical literature in-

clined him to attach some importance to these occurrences; and his scientific training encouraged him to frame his visions as a system. Gradually he drifted into an increasingly "spiritual" frame of mind, in which he saw the truth in symbolic dreams, whose significance was hard to interpret.[23] But soon his relations with the heavenly kingdoms grew more direct, and he held conversations with angels and spirits. He described the process as follows: ". . . when angels speak for a man they turn themselves to him and conjoin themselves with him; and this conjunction of angel with man causes both to be in like thought." The angels appeared to speak in his own language; but conversation with them was a rarity, because the state of man had become so changed that "this commerce is no longer with angels, but with spirits who are not in heaven." Even this sort of contact had become uncommon, however, because it was dangerous.[24]

Now here was a man who claimed, in the most matter-of-fact way, to have been in daily contact with the spirit world, and described the types of creature he encountered, such as those who in life had been "entirely concerned about mensurations"[25] much in the manner in which the advanced natural scientists were beginning to classify rocks, animals, and other objects of their legitimate interest. Moreover, the doctrine propagated by the Church of the New Jerusalem well fitted the contemporary mood of apocalypse. Swedenborg had taught that there had already been two great judgments which had fallen on mankind; and both had signalled the end of an established Church. Thus, the Flood had meant the end of a hypothetical Most Ancient Church; and the Crucifixion that of the Ancient Representative Church. Swedenborg had concluded that the Third Age, that of the Christian Church, was due in its turn to be overthrown.[26] This third judgment had been prophesied by Christ and foretold in Revelations. It was in this tradition that the Church of the New Jerusalem sought to inaugurate the New Age. Robert Hindmarsh, one of the leading lights of the early "New Church," with the hope of the new dis-

pensation firmly upon him, felt—in common with almost every mystic in Europe—that the Holy Alliance would fulfill every prophecy of the Millennium. Accordingly, he dispatched letters to the three signatory monarchs, together with parcels of books from the New Jerusalem Temple, Salford, Manchester. There was consternation in Salford when Frederick William of Prussia actually bothered to reply, in an envelope emblazoned with the arms of his house.[27] The incident, unimportant in itself, is symptomatic of the tenor of thought prevailing among the devotees of the New Jerusalem. It was in this manner that the thought of Swedenborg was transmitted outside the studies of the intelligentsia.

To the prehistory of Spiritualism, Franz Anton Mesmer (*c.* 1734-1815) contributed two things, a movement, and the popularizing of the idea of trance. From the Mesmeric movement other cults than Spiritualism were to take their inspiration. But Spiritualism alone came to depend on the notion of trance; for it was in trance that the spirits spoke through the medium and gave messages from the departed. The high points in Mesmer's career are easily charted. In 1765 he passed his medical examinations with honors. But the title of his thesis harked back to the medicine of a century before: *De influxu planetarium in corpus humanum*, the influence of the planets on the human body—this betrayed his preoccupation with the theories of Paracelsus and even earlier medical speculators. It was in this dissertation that he first broached his idea that the influence of the stars on the body might be exercised by means of a "subtle fluid," a physical means of transferring force.[28]

For some years these ideas lay fallow, but in 1774 Mesmer was again inspired by the teaching of Paracelsus. In that year he heard of the astonishing success of the Jesuit Father Maximillian Hell, one of Maria Theresa's court astrologers, in curing his patients with magnets. This was a Paracelsian prescription for transferring the supposedly beneficial "subtle fluids" into the patient's body. Mesmer now began to improve upon his master's theories, for after a

period of experimentation he became convinced that the cures which he also was obtaining were effected by the means, not of his magnets, but of his own bodily influence.[29] His ideas became more elaborate, until in Paris he drew up a *Memorandum* on his discovery of this new force, which he called "Animal Magnetism."

Propositions

1. A responsive influence exists between the heavenly bodies, the earth, and all animated bodies.
2. A fluid universally diffused, so continuous as to admit no vacuum, incomparably subtle, and naturally susceptible of receiving, spreading, and communicating all motor disturbances, is the means of this influence.
3. This reciprocal action is subject to mechanical laws with which we are not yet familar.[30]

From these relatively tentative conclusions all sorts of strange gospels were to arise.

The most immediately obvious application of "Animal Magnetism" was in medicine. The initial practitioners of "magnetic" cures were sometimes bizarre in their choice of method. In 1782 a French commission, which included Benjamin Franklin and that indefatigable sniffer in unlikely places, the astronomer Bailly, reported on the cure as practiced by Mesmer's friend and disciple, D'Eslon. The hapless patients stood round a tub, filled with bottles covered with water. From this tub led iron rods, which they could place on the afflicted parts of their anatomy. Sometimes they held hands, to form a circle; sometimes singing took place. Sooner or later the magnetic "crisis" set in, characterized by convulsions, vomiting, hysteria, and the spitting of blood; after which, unsurprisingly, the patients collapsed. The commission could find no evidence of the magnetic fluid.[31]

The chief agent of magnetic cures, however, was the "mesmeric sleep." In this miraculous state the magnetizer could persuade his subject that his illness was illusory. In a more sophisticated version, the operator merely mesmerized the subject, and while he was asleep carried out an

operation by orthodox surgical means. Significantly for the development of Spiritualism, it was in the English-speaking world that the use of mesmerism in medicine obtained its earliest serious hearing. In 1838 John Elliotson was forced to resign his Professorship at University College Hospital, London, because of his use of animal magnetism. Five years later he started the *Zoist* to publicize his views, and the idea of operations performed under mesmeric influence began to gain ground. A Scot, James Esdaile, carried out the first such operation in 1845, at Hooghly, India; and in response to his success a Mesmeric Hospital was set up at Calcutta. The movement found its first theoretician in James Braid who, in 1843, published his *Neurypnology, or The Rationale of Nervous Sleep*.[32] But it never established itself within the citadel of Establishment medicine. The reasons for this, and the real significance of this rejection will be discussed later, but at the moment it is sufficient to observe that Elliotson's unorthodox views did not stop at animal magnetism, but included the practice of phrenology—the art of reading character from the bumps on the head—and that in 1824 he had founded the Phrenological Society of London.[33] We should not be surprised to discover further minority movements combining in this fashion during the course of the occult revival.

Elliotson, however, was the holder of a Chair: this could not be said of the majority of those in America who affected to practice mesmeric medicine, phrenology, and general cure-all under the titles of "Doctor" or "Professor." The most primitive superstitions became elevated to the status of the new sciences; to the "magical" element already inherent in the mesmeric cure was added another, no less disturbing. While subjects had been in this state of trance, voices had spoken through them, purporting to be those of dead people. Frank Podmore cites two interesting cases: the first from as early as 1787, when the spirits were questioned in Sweden through the mouth of a gardener's wife.[34] The second was brought to the notice of the public in January, 1848, when the furniture-restorer, Alphonse

Cahagnet, published an account of his lengthy observations of Adèle Maginot, who produced in the trance state visions of dead people very much like those that mediums claim to obtain today. Similarly, the German experimenter, Jung-Stilling, had called attention to the apparent communication through those in trance with the spirit world.

Thus, when the rappings at Hydesville reached a more than parochial public, when tables began to turn, twist, and levitate from New York State to St. Petersburg, the material was at hand for the scholarly and the philosophical to contrive of it a system. Mesmeric thought was not to be exiled to the domain of "quack medicine" for a long time yet. The experiments of the Mesmerists were part of the revolution in scientific thought which was everywhere apparent. Man's knowledge, it seemed, had long been confined within a small, dark box of man's own making. It was not at all unlikely that on breaking out from this constriction the Kingdom of Heaven might also be found on the other side.

It was the mesmeric movement in its form as popular superstition that gave birth to Andrew Jackson Davis, the "Seer of Poughkeepsie," who was to become the first theoretician of the Spiritualist movement.[35] Davis—and what seer or poet does not do so?—describes his childhood as misunderstood and sensitive. For his son's nightmares, father Davis prescribed brimstone and treacle; for the daydreams and fantasies which were later taken as evidence of a supernatural vocation, the diagnosis was "worms."[36] In 1843, when Andrew Jackson Davis was seventeen, there appeared in Poughkeepsie a Professor Grimes who held the Chair of Medical Jurisprudence at Castletown Medical College, and was something of a theoretician of mesmerism. He was a firm believer in the "subtle fluid," which he called the "Etherium," and he proposed to demonstrate his theories to the gawping inhabitants of Poughkeepsie by mesmerizing several test subjects, among whom was Andrew Jackson Davis. With Davis, the attempt at mesmerism was a failure; but after the professor's depar-

ture, a tailor named Levingston decided to try his own powers.[37]

Davis went into trance, he was afterwards to relate, with the greatest reluctance. He felt as if he was dying.

> Horrid thoughts of disorganization continued to distress me. Naught but an eternal midnight clothed my tender spirit, and I was filled with terror. The darkness became more dark and appalling. And now I was seized with an unearthly shudder, and—terrible to relate—I found myself revolving in that blackened gloom with an inconceivable velocity! I seemed to be revolving in a spiral path, with an orbit, wide at first, and every revolution on my descending flight contracted my movement. Down, down, I sank, till immersed in that mighty ocean where conflicting elements were swallowed by a mountain wave of darkness, which grasped me within its mighty folds, and I sank to the lowest depths of forgetfulness.

Davis's own explanations for these unpleasant sensations bear a remarkable resemblance to the accounts given by those who have taken mescaline or LSD. They were, he thought:

> in a great measure attributable to the gloomy views of death, and of possible subsequent conditions, instilled into his mind through early theological teachings. These sensations were not experienced on subsequently entering the state.[38]

In other words, his bad trip resulted from the fear of hell-fire.

Davis began to give demonstrations of his clairvoyance in the mesmeric state. These seem to have been little better than simple conjuring. For example, he would read a newspaper blindfolded. But, according to his own account, his powers developed rapidly, and he soon found himself bodily transported around the countryside. Once he was taken forty miles away into the Catskill Mountains, where he met a mysterious stranger with a curious silver cane. This opened up, and proved to contain all the secrets of medicine, in the shape of small blocks, with the name of the

disease on the outside, and a drug to cure it within. Davis was not allowed to keep the silver cane, but nonetheless set about practicing mesmeric medicine and opened two successful "clairvoyant clinics," where he diagnosed the illness of a patient while himself mesmerized. Throughout his career he continued to practice various forms of medicine; but it was not until 1886 that he obtained a recognized medical degree, and his prescriptions strike the reader as belonging to a much older world than that of mesmerism, that of ghosts and goblins and the little people. For a poisoned finger, frog's skin was to be applied; for deafness rats' skins behind the ear, or oil from the legs of weasels. His most orthodox cures contained an element of the "folksy": for example, part of the remedy for "Pain in the Neck of Housekeepers" was to "Squeeze your throat whenever it is threatened with soreness, and gargle with red-pepper. Chew a few chamomile flowers before breakfast."[39]

It is precisely this element of nature-wizardry in the early career of Andrew Jackson Davis that should be emphasized, because Davis himself was always insistent that he was a man of the people. Of the fact there can be no doubt; but the Seer damaged his case with over-much protesting. He was fond of repeating that he had only read one book in his life, and that a romantic novel. This statement is flatly contradicted by the familiarity shown by Davis with the works of Swedenborg and the socialist Charles Fourier—the latter originally through a book called *The Social Destiny of Man.* According to one of Davis's early supporters, the Rev. George Bush, Professor of Hebrew at the University of New York, Davis was able before 1845 to quote passages from the *Arcana Coelestia* with the exact references. The date is quite important, because it was in 1845 that Davis felt "impressed" to begin dictating in trance the work that made his reputation, *The Principles of Nature.* A study of this compendium of poor philosophy and ecstatic language reveals an acquaintance with Swedenborg which is more than

superficial; and Davis, at least, was far from illiterate, occasionally rising to a moving pitch of visionary exaltation.[40]

> In the beginning, the Univercoelum was one boundless, undefinable and unimaginable ocean of LIQUID FIRE! The most vigorous and ambitious imagination is not capable of forming an adequate conception of the height, and depth, and length, and breadth thereof. There was one vast expanse of liquid substance. It was without forms; for it was but *one* Form. It had no motions; but it was an eternity of Motion. It was without parts; for it was a Whole. Particles did not exist; but the Whole was as *one* Particle. There were no suns, but it was one Eternal Sun.[41]

We are either forced to disbelieve the Seer of Poughkeepsie or to have recourse to the concept of "clairvoyance of printed matter," which has been put forward by his supporters. As regards the conditions in which *The Principles of Nature* were dictated by the entranced Davis to his mesmerizer, Dr. Lyon, and amanuensis, the Rev. William Fishbaugh, there is little to suggest the presence of an organized fraud; and we must suspend judgment.[42] Dictated by spirits, Davis's conscious or subconscious mind, filtered through editors or not, *The Principles of Nature* is a remarkable production, built by or around a village lad with his head stuffed full of Swedenborg and second-hand social theories, who became a prophet because he suited the mood of the time. The book itself is a good index to that very mood.

The mood was frankly revolutionary. His English publisher, John Chapman, felt it necessary to introduce Davis with a disclaimer which would absolve him from a charge of subversive activities. The year, after all, was 1847, and all kinds of apocalypse were at hand. "But those readers who are acquainted with the general character of my publications will not suspect me of being swayed by such considerations . . ."[43] No, but they might well and justly suspect Davis. It is the second volume which is from this point of view the most interesting: the first containing

Davis's hyperbolic if gorgeous cosmology. The sequel is entitled *A Voice to Mankind,* a title placing it squarely within the polemical fashion of the day, and is a tract of the most rabid socialism.

There are three classes of society:

> The poor, ignorant, enslaved, oppressed, and working classes.
> The semi-wealthy, learned, enslavers, oppressors, and dictating classes.
> The rich, intelligent, enslaving, oppressing, and idle classes . . .[44]

Society exploits the poor who, because they are uneducated, are more easily enslaved by superstition and suppressed by legal codes. The poor are nonetheless the basis of society.

> The poor are the *sustainers,* because they are the *industrious.* They are the producers of wealth, and of all the blessings that circulate through other and higher societies; and yet they are the forgotten, the despised, and the uneducated![45]

Society is constituted so as to preserve the status quo: the professional classes are united with this end in view. But of all professions "none is absolutely more unenviable and more corrupting than that sustained by CLERGYMEN."[46] The constant fulminations of Davis against the clergy are in direct contrast to his earliest recorded writings, dating from his mesmeric period, the *Lectures on Clairmativeness.* There salvation is taught to lie in Christ alone; here the ecclesiastics are denounced as keeping the people in subjection. Podmore has conjectured that the early work was suppressed;[47] and if this is so, it would seem that a case could be made out for Davis changing his views to meet the demands of the moment.

The human race, thinks the Seer, is diseased. Men are all organs of the great human body. In this, certainly, there is a divinely-ordered hierarchy of ability through which individuals can progress, but the fundamental law is the law of association. This is drawn directly from Fourier. "There is a constitutional and mutual affection manifested between

every particle and compound in Being. This is the *law of association.*" The solution to society's ills Davis finds in the formation of cooperatives, and an equitable division of labor. Over the whole derived theory is laid the gloss of the Millennium. He prophesies the Golden Age, visualized before him by David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Malachi, Confucius, Zoroaster, Brahma, Jesus, Mohammed, and Fourier. In this remarkable time—"In every continent, nations converse through the medium of the electric fire." The New Age was imminent—it was coming—now! "The tide of intelligence is rising, and is flowing to and over all nations, even as an ocean of truth and knowledge . . . IT EBBS NOT AGAIN!"[48]

This was the man who became the leading theorist of the Spiritualist movement. But it seems just as likely from *The Principles of Nature* that he could have become a political agitator, a Utopian socialist, or an itinerant mesmerist of the backwoods. His association with the Spiritualist cause was probably more a matter of chance than choice. The year after his great work was published saw the political upheavals in Europe, but also the spiritual *bouleversement* nearer home. Davis, and the group gathered round him and his paper, the *Univercoelum*, were acknowledged authorities on the supernatural, and it was from this group, which included Thomas Lake Harris, that most of the leaders of the Spiritualist movement came.[49] Davis himself went from strength to strength. He developed the power to pass into the clairvoyant state without the need for a magnetizer; he was called in to examine epidemics of rapping for the presence of spirits; and the most important, he exercised his new faculty in plotting the geography of the "Summer-Land," from which the spirits communicated with those still on earth. Chiefly on the basis of recent astronomical investigation into the rings of Saturn, he argued the possibility of the real, physical existence of this area in the Milky Way; but spirits ascending upwards through the six spheres to the Godhead soon lost all material basis.[50] This is not the place to discuss his sources;

for the Spiritualists fastened on to the Summer-Land, and legions of spirits afterwards made it their own. But the Seer of Poughkeepsie never lost his character as a social reformer; and it is unsurprising to find that a resolution moved by him and his wife Mary, at a Spiritualist Congress of September 1856, was concerned not with the problems of other-world geography, but with a greater degree of emancipation for married women.[51]

Andrew Jackson Davis was not the only prominent Spiritualist to have a bent for social reform. At the age of eighty-three Robert Owen was converted by sittings with the American medium, Mrs. Hayden. In his *Rational Quarterly Review* he made a formal profession of faith, and the next year (1854) brought out the first part of *The New Existence of Man upon Earth* declaring that the revelation of the spirits heralded the Millennium. Owen seems, in fact, only to have been interested in the spirits as heralds of his new order. At his séances he would ask whether various Heads of State were the "proper persons" to inaugurate the New Dispensation. At a convention on 14 May 1856, called "The First Meeting of the Congress of the Reformers of the World," there were introduced, under his auspices but emanating from a mediumistic source, detailed plans for "Homes of Harmony," of a strange new architecture.[52] It is not Owen's influence on the Spiritualist movement which is important, but the mere fact that he could have seen the spirits as the precursors of his long-awaited Millennium. Movements which to us seem far apart could to contemporaries appear to run parallel: it is not really surprising, because they responded to the same conditions. The same crisis of consciousness was forced on socialist and primitive mystic alike.

The areas in which Spiritualism first arose and obtained a real hold were, according to a recent survey, those of the highest educational standards and the lowest rate of illiteracy. In this connection is noted the Lyceum movement for adult education in the United States, which had its heyday in the 1820s and 1830s. By 1834 some three thousand

Lyceums existed under State Boards.[53] Now it is worth noting that the emphasis is placed on *adult* education: that is to say, that there is a certain degree of *self*-education involved. It was not necessarily in the areas of the highest standards at the upper extreme of the scale in which Spiritualism took root. It is noteworthy that Andrew Jackson Davis betrays his chagrin at his own lack of orthodox schooling all through *A Voice to Mankind:* the poor are *uneducated,* society is designed to keep them so. His public insistence on his lack of skill at reading can only be reconciled with his establishment of a "Children's Lyceum" or "Spiritualist Sunday School," if we assume that the image he desired to project was that of the deprived child making sure that others would have the benefits he had lacked. There is unfortunately no evidence to prove the connection between Spiritualism and the man anxious "to better himself"; but it might be a profitable line of enquiry.

In Britain, Spiritualism was almost purely an urban religion. Again, its appeal was not confined to the working class. But it is doubtful whether this statement holds outside London, for in 1878 one London Spiritualist was recorded as saying that the bulk of Spiritualist support in the North came from people whom he described as "utterly illiterate to an astounding degree."[54] There is not enough evidence to allow of anything but speculation as to exactly what sort of person joined the ranks of the new religion. All that can be said is that Spiritualism gained converts from every section of society, that the reasons for conversion were most likely to be individual and personal; but that there is a definite connection between the new Millennium of the spirits, and that of the social reformers, made chiefly in the writings of Andrew Jackson Davis.

At all events, the movement spread. In France, Davis's "Summer-Land" found a rival theology in that of "Allan Kardec."[55] Kardec had no pretensions to seership, but had discovered what seemed to him to be a "perfectly coherent picture of the universe" through the mediumship of two young girls. This doctrine perhaps owed something to the

contemporary interest in the Orient, for the lynch-pin was reincarnation. Reincarnation took place in other worlds as well as this, and at the end of the process the travelling soul became pure spirit.[56] This process was not, however, incompatible with Christianity. Here Kardec follows Swedenborg; for he saw Spiritualism as the new revelation complementing and supplanting those of Moses and Christ.[57]

Imperial Courts were not immune to the new concern. In Russia the position of the Tsar with regard to the Orthodox Church, and still more with regard to the censorship regulations, did not permit Imperial opinion on the spirits to be disclosed. But ardent Spiritualists fondly supposed that, given the opportunity, the Romanovs would declare for the new dispensation. Meanwhile they had to content themselves with the knowledge that a Captain Perbikov of the Imperial Navy was permitted to issue a periodical of Spiritualist complexion, while the redoubtable Count Alexander Aksakov—who was much too intellectual ever to have had a wide public—was forced to publish from Leipzig.[58]

In Austria, Imperial Archduke Johann became alarmed at the spread of Spiritualism. He noted

> that this modern superstition flourishes not only among the weavers of the Braunauer country, or among the workmen and peasants in Reichenberg, but it has also fixed its abode in numerous palaces and residences of our nobility, so that in many cities of the monarchy, and especially in Vienna and Buda-Pesth, entire spiritualistic societies exist, carrying on their obscure nuisance without any interference.

He approached Baron Hellenbach, the most eminent Austrian Spiritualist, and arranged a series of sittings in the archducal palace with the American materializing medium, Harry Bastian. Three highly unsatisfying demonstrations followed, culminating in the capture by the Archduke of Bastian disguised as a spirit, "half Roman, half knight, with bare head, draped in white, perfect in every way, and refulgent."[59]

In Berlin the Kaiser attended a séance in the home of the von Moltke family, and was greatly discomfitted when the young medium began to prophesy great ill-fortune to the reigning house. As a result he forbade any public mention of psychic matters.[60] As for Britain, the Spiritualists began as early as 1864[61] to claim Queen Victoria as a convert. The Queen's seclusion after the death of Albert, and her morbid concern with the after-life in general, gave credence to the most extravagant of rumors. Of the several stories linking the Queen's name with the supernatural, the most tenacious is the theory that John Brown acted as medium in séances in which the spirit of Prince Albert made its appearance. It is the most tenacious because of lack of evidence to disprove it: the Spiritualists claim that the records of the séances were destroyed in the bonfire organized after the Queen's death by Sir Henry Ponsonby and the Dean of Windsor. In default of evidence the opinion of Victoria's biographer must be respected that the theory is extremely unlikely.[62]

Interesting as is the evidence of exalted contact with Spiritualism, in showing how the new religion caught the attention of even the most unlikely quarters, the attitude of the learned world, of the intellectuals, and of the new breed of rational scientific investigator is of far more significance. It is of peculiar interest that the rationalist approach sometimes did not hold up under fire, that "scientific investigators" found themselves catapulted into faith. For the inquisitive temper of the age could not suffer for long reports of marvels unexplained. If in America the attempt to set up an investigating commission had failed, in London in 1869, the Dialectical Society appointed a committee to look into the phenomena of Spiritualism, which included the reformer Charles Bradlaugh among its members. The Society had the temerity to invite T. H. Huxley to take part. The retort was stinging:

> In the first place, I have no time for such an enquiry, which would involve much trouble, and (unless it were unlike en-

> quiries of that kind I have known) much annoyance. In the second place, I take no interest in the subject. The only case of "Spiritualism" I have had the opportunity of examining for myself was as gross an imposture as ever came under my notice. But supposing the phenomena to be genuine—they do not interest me. If anybody would endow me with the faculty of listening to the chatter of old women and curates in the nearest cathedral town, I should decline the privilege, having better things to do.
>
> And if the folk in the spiritual world do not talk more wisely and sensibly than their friends report them to do, I put them in the same category.[63]

It is a lamentable fact that Huxley's description of spirit conversations seems apt; and if other members of his profession had possessed a little more of Huxley's testiness, the Spiritualist movement in particular—and the occult revival as a whole—would have lost much of its initial impulse.

In 1882 the Society for Psychical Research was founded. In effect it was a combination of those groups already working independently in the investigation of spiritualist and other psychic phenomena (telepathy, clairvoyance, etc.). Of these the most important was that centered round Henry Sidgwick, Frederic Myers and Edmund Gurney, all Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge, and deriving its inspiration from the Cambridge University Ghost Society, founded by no less a person than Edward White Benson, the future Archbishop of Canterbury. As A. C. Benson wrote in his biography of his father, the Archbishop was always more interested in psychic phenomena than he cared to admit. Two members of the Ghost Club became Bishops, and one a Professor of Divinity.[64] Of the Benson family more will be heard later; it is with Sidgwick, himself a close relation of the Bensons, and his SPR that we are now concerned.

The Society was set up with the loosest of terms of reference. It was to examine "that large group of debatable phenomena designated by such terms as mesmeric, psychical, and spiritualistic."[65] Its investigations, as befitted a

body of essentially academic origins, which issued—and still issues—a *Journal* and *Proceedings* bound and printed as learned publications, were to be of a strictly scientific character. Among the famous names which appear in the record of the activities of the Society for Psychical Research, are William Crookes, Oliver Lodge, Andrew Lang, Conan Doyle, and Arthur and Gerald Balfour. The honor of the Balfours remains unimpugned, but whether there is a significance in the inclusion in the roll of honor of two tellers of tales, the reader must judge for himself.

For the moment, it will suffice to weight the case slightly against the Society. That a large number of experiments into the most diverse phenomena were carried out in the best of faith remains undoubted. That no corporate body can ever be responsible for the vagaries of its several members is an axiom which scarcely needs recalling. But the original members of the SPR could no more escape the 19th-century preoccupation with the irrational than could any of their contemporaries.

William Crookes, afterwards knighted and President of the Royal Society, was President of the SPR in 1896-9. The investigation which tarnished his reputation was the case of Florence Cook, a medium who produced materializations, chiefly of a spirit called "Katie King." Trevor Hall, who seems to have made it his mission to explode certain Victorian balloons of righteousness, has convincingly suggested that Florence Cook, whom Crookes pronounced to be genuine, was a fraudulent medium as well as sexually rapacious; and that Crookes's investigation of 1874 became the cover for an affair.[66] His contemporaries evidently thought Crookes's integrity to be in question; for despite his undoubted eminence in his own field, the photographs which were taken of him arm in arm with his materialized "angel" nearly cost him his membership of the Royal Society.

Hall's verdict on the circumstances surrounding the death of Edmund Gurney is equally depressing. Gurney was found dead with a bottle of chloroform beside him in a

Brighton hotel on 23 June 1888. There seems to be little doubt that he died by his own hand. The diary of Alice James, sister of William and Henry, speaks of Gurney's suicide as a matter of common gossip.[67] The reasons which made this speculation likely were Gurney's depressive temperament, and the recent collapse of his life's work. Gurney, from existing pleasantly on a private income, had first tried to make his mark on music, then turned to medicine, afterwards to law. No career was successful. Eventually he threw himself into psychic research with all the force of his undoubted talents. With Myers and Podmore he wrote *Phantasms of the Living*, a laboriously detailed work of over 1,300 pages, most of which he himself prepared. He then, argues Hall, discovered that much of the evidence on which he relied was false, based as it was on experiments with a pair of telepathists who seemed to uninvolved observers to be obvious tricksters.[68] The case is that Gurney's integrity was such that he could not go on living with the knowledge that he had published false evidence, and took an overdose. It is only fair to add that competent authorities have disagreed with this presentation of the evidence,[69] and that Trevor Hall's view of the founding fathers of psychic research is hotly disputed. Certain factors should be borne in mind when assessing the controversy.

The first is the concentration of early SPR research on the problems of Spiritualism and survival after death. It was not until the 1920s that psychic researchers began to turn their attention to the more respectable pursuits—from the point of view of materialist science—of laboratory measurement of phenomena that did not have so direct a bearing on man's conception of his status in the universe. The concern of the early researchers with the possibilities of immortality was by no means exclusive, and in view of the current fascination with the claims of Spiritualism was perfectly natural. However, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that in certain cases the SPR fulfilled the function of Spiritualist church for intellectuals. Even the function of providing social status was part of its appeal. Frank Pod-

more, who was found drowned in 1910 in a pool near Malvern, seems to have been pressingly ambitious to rise in the Society,[70] and Ada Goodrich Freer, who had charge of the SPR enquiry into second sight in the Highlands of Scotland, was obviously an incurable social climber.[71] These remarks are made to show that despite the admirable intentions of the Society, it cannot completely claim exemption from considerations which would apply to the study of a religious cult proper. The immense quantity of energy and enthusiasm with which the pioneer researchers set out to belabor the unknown with the big stick of the scientific method is at least partly vitiated by the positions of several members who were concerned with Psychical Research because they wanted to believe.

Of none is this more true than of Frederic Myers. The almost despairing shout of joy—if there can be such a thing—which he gives at the end of his *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* is most revealing. He believes that he has proved the existence of a universal telepathic link connecting all mankind. We are not alone, he shouts, we need no longer be afraid of the terrors of the immeasurable universe. "The true security is the telepathic law."[72]

There is little to be gained by laboring the point that psychical researchers have been as gullible as the rest of mankind. The Society for Psychical Research sprang from its time, was inspired by the same crisis as were specifically religious groups, and carried with it the burden of contemporary scientific dogma. In doing so it made at least one fatal error, which is admirably categorized by the President of the Anglican Fellowship for Psychic Studies:

> No wonder that in 1882 the founders of the SPR looked with admiration on the scientific method. No wonder that, quite rightly, they sought to apply to the investigation of the psychic the same methods as had been applied to the material. But I sometimes wonder, whether in doing so a factor has not been left out of account. The material sciences are concerned with what can be measured and weighed. Psychic Research is con-

> cerned with what cannot be measured or weighed . . . We should surely recognize that we often need a totally different and less direct method of measuring. Electricity cannot be measured like beer in a pint pot.[73]

The SPR was a peculiar hybrid of Spiritualist cult and dedicated rationalism; as such it defies classification.

The Spiritualist faith spread and held its ground. By 1927—admittedly these figures are swollen by the effects of the First World War—the International Spiritualists' Federation was to claim branches in almost every developed country in the world.[74] Everywhere the bereaved flocked to be comforted, the frightened to obtain direct reassurance of their immortality. In darkened rooms, instruments would play. Flowers, and even fish, would land on the laps of those present; and best of all, from a trance, the medium would speak with the voice of a spirit from the Summer-Land. About the state of mediumistic trance little is known, although trances have a place in religious ceremonies all over the world. Stewart Wavell describes a ceremony in Malaya near Batu Pahat where dancers mounted on hobby-horses "ride" for hours in an ecstasy which is supposedly inspired by the *hantu*, or spirits of dead horses—there are no horses in Malaya, and the men "ride" remarkably well.[75] When a mystic believes he is achieving "Union with God" or the "Timeless Moment," or whatever he likes to call the fusion of the One and the Many, he also may be in trance. The entranced person may thus be the possessed or in a sense the possessor; but the Spiritualist terms, the medium is always supposed to be in the former state.

Trances come in several kinds. The Japanese distinguish four—*Muchu*, ecstasy or rapture; *Shisshi, Konsui-Jotai*, a coma; *Saimin-Jotai*, a hypnotic state; and *Mugen no Kyo*, "the state of mind when the soul leaves the body and roams about in the world of mystery."[76] All four sorts of trance have been in evidence in the history of the Spiritualist movement. There are certain correspondences between the

sensations of mediums and of people who claim to be able to free their souls from their bodies.

Recent experiments with an electro-encephalograph have proved indefinite.[77] Investigators have also been concerned to find out whether the trance of the spirit medium is in reality a sort of self-hypnosis; and there is a certain amount of evidence for the view that the personalities who speak through the mouth of the medium are parts of his own consciousness.

Frederic Myers once quoted an interesting case of what he called "pseudo-possession."[78] A Frenchman, Achille, was morbid and timid, but happily married. On his return from a business trip in 1890 he became morose and taciturn, said goodbye to his family, and for two whole days stretched himself out on his bed. After lying motionless for this considerable period, he sat up and burst into a terrible laugh, "a lugubrious, satanic laugh which went on for more than two hours." To every question he answered, "There's nothing to be done! Let's have some more champagne!" Eventually he fancied himself possessed by devils, and made several attempts at suicide. Under hypnosis it was discovered that he had been unfaithful to his wife. The pressure of guilt to which he had been subjected had apparently brought about his "possession."

The most famous case of "pseudo-possession" is that of the Swiss medium, Hélène Smith, who claimed to have existed in at least three previous incarnations: one as Marie Antoinette, one as an Indian princess, and another on the planet Mars.[79] While in trance, Hélène, whose good faith never seems to have been in doubt, would reveal details of her former lives. It is possible that she had been influenced by the theories of Allan Kardec. The Martian incarnation was the most intriguing, for not only did the picture of Mars hold together with remarkable consistency, but the story was buttressed by a logically decipherable Martian language. Thomas Flournoy, who made an exhaustive investigation of the case, concluded of Hélène's Mars: "A

wise little imagination of ten or twelve years old would have deemed it quite droll and original to make people up there eat on square plates with a furrow for gravy . . ." Whoever was responsible for Hélène's Martian stories was not interested in questions which would have concerned adults interested in a Martian civilization. Hélène's Mars was consistent, but it was completely derived from earthly experiences, and over everything hung an aura of the sham Oriental. Therefore, concluded Flournoy, the Martian episodes were concocted by an infantile section of Hélène's personality which was otherwise repressed.[80]

These conclusions were confirmed by an analysis of the Martian language. Although perfectly logical, only French roots had been used. Sample: "*Móde ké hed oné chandène tése mune ten ti vi.*" Flournoy's translation: "*Mère, qu'ils sont délicieux, ces moments près de toi.*" As she grew up, Hélène had had German lessons, and it was unlikely that she would only have used French components if an older self had manufactured "Martian." This seemed to clinch the matter. Myers wrote: "For Hélène's one-in-a-hundred mind substitute the one-in-a-million mind of (Robert) Louis Stevenson; let him dream—not Hélène's insipid tale of 'Essenale' (a Martian), but 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,' and one sees at once the advantage of relegating voluntary ends to automatic execution . . ."[81] As well as being an interesting comment on the processes of poetic inspiration, it is a convenient summary of one possible explanation of some mediumistic trances. But this does not really enlighten the enquirer as to why there should suddenly have arisen a large number of trance mediums at a certain point in time.

Two suggestions may be offered. Either the mediums arose to supply the demand, or a certain proportion of the interest in Spiritualist phenomena was stimulated by an astounding crop of mediums. If the first theory is true, it is simple to fit the rapid access of trance mediums into a view of Spiritualism as a response to the crisis of Western thought. If the second is true, and there really was an un-

paralleled increase in trance mediumship, despite the perpetual attempts of Spiritualists to prove that their miracles had an antediluvian pedigree, enough has been said about the possibilities of "pseudo-possession" to suggest that this increase represented to subconscious recognition of that very crisis—that "the fear of freedom" in fact produced schizophrenia on a large scale—and that it took the rather specialized form of mediumship because of the social circumstances of the day and the particular bents of those afflicted. Attractive though this is, we are led regrettably back to the first conclusion.

The function of trance is much clearer. Among the Akawaio Indians of Guyana, the tribal shaman goes into a trance and functions both as doctor and law-court. Through him the spirits can examine everyone concerned in a dispute. "A good séance provides an opportunity for bringing into the open all the troubles and problems of the group, the petty disputes and offenses as well as the major causes of disruption."[82] With the advantage of impersonality—the spirits are responsible for all awkward questions, and the séance is conducted in a darkness which conceals the reactions of those taking part—the séance is an admirable form of safely regulating society. In an industrial society, such "primitive" means can still work well, in that the medium is not the lawgiver—though he may still be a "psychic healer"—but is able to use his privileged position much as the shaman does. In this way the séance works today, and I have been present on an occasion when the medium, who was not in trance, made little pretense of clairvoyantly attending to the spirits, but merely sorted out the very tangled lives of two of the sitters.

Spiritualism is at once the most primitive and the most comprehensible of responses to the crisis of consciousness. As the tide of rationalism and the new science rose higher, as the sense of collective insecurity waxed, men turned to the ultimate consolation of the immortality of souls. They could shout in the face of the bogey Darwin that they knew they were more than the outcome of a biological process,

that they too had "scientific proof"—and that theirs was of the reality of the after-life. Death, the shadow at the backs of every generation, had in the 19th century to be met by many people face to face.

Small blame if they met him with primitive methods. The terror was an ancient terror and was banished by ancient means. The *idea,* if not the reality of possession, is old as the hills. But the primitive reaction gathered round itself a number of alien elements. To a large extent it grew out of the Mesmeric movement, and the motley collection of ideas which had fastened themselves to Mesmer were drawn along in the baggage. It was also connected closely with the millenarian expectations of the mid-century, both in social and religious terms. This legacy Spiritualism inherited from its time and its place of origin. Like the almost contemporary American adventist movements, Spiritualism originated in the "burned-over" district.[53] This term comprises the areas of New York State which had been as it were exhausted by the religious revivals of the early 19th century. It was also directly on the route West of immigrants from Europe; it had in fact recently been frontier territory itself. In the "burned-over" district, successive waves of disoriented immigrants joined those who had felt the impact of the Revivalist preachers to create a confusion of doubt and belief. In this area was a concentration of the problems which beset the Western world. Spiritualism and the other cults which thrived here found a ready public. As Frank Podmore noted, Spiritualism was started by two naughty children; and its appeal is to the child in man, who is perpetually whistling in the dark.

And as a primitive reaction to uncertainty, the widespread acceptance of Spiritualism helped to prepare minds in Europe and America for more sophisticated revelations. From mere amused hospitality to the miraculous, many strange and exotic fruits might grow.

1. For a description of the cottage, see A. Leah Underhill, *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism* (New York, 1885), p. 476.

2. Emma Hardinge, *Modern American Spiritualism* (New York, 1870), p. 547.

3. E. W. Capron, *Modern Spiritualism, in facts and fanaticisms* (Boston, 1855), p. 40.

4. Frank Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism* (London, 1902), vol. I, pp. 182-3. Podmore's is the standard work on the growth of Spiritualism; but to the modern reader the way in which he assumes the connection of Mesmerism and Spiritualism might seem unclear. Inevitably, I have drawn heavily on his analysis.

5. Quoted Capron, *Spiritualism*, pp. 367-8. Weller was Senator for California.

6. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. I, pp. 184-5.

7. Capron, *Spiritualism*, p. 393.

8. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. I, p. 185.

9. *Light* (London, 15 December 1888), p. 619.

10. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, pp. 181-2.

11. Printed in R. B. Davenport, *The Death-Blow to Spiritualism* (New York, 1888), p. 217.

12. *Light* (3 November 1888), p. 543.

13. *The Spiritualist* (15 May 1873), quoted by J. N. Maskelyne, *Modern Spiritualism* (London), p. 67.

14. Viscount Adare, *Experiences in Spiritualism with Mr. D. D. Home* (London, 1870), pp. 82-3. The distance was seven feet four inches, and the date, 16 December 1868. Trevor H. Hall, *New Light on Old Ghosts* (London, 1965, pp. 86 ff.), has cast doubt upon almost every aspect of Adare's account, beginning with the address at which the séance took place. However, I cite Adare's narrative, in order to show the possible extent of belief in Spiritualist phenomena.

15. Adare, *Experiences in Spiritualism*, pp. 77-8.

16. The Davenports, William and Ira, were born in Buffalo in 1839 and 1841. They came to England in 1864, four years before Home's phenomena recorded above. In Liverpool the Davenports were exposed by a "Herr Dobler, a conjuror."

17. See, e.g., *The Ghost*, published as late as 1936 by Dr. Edward McGlynn of New York. The July number of that year contained instructions for materializing "ectoplasm."

18. Harry Price and E. J. Dingwall (eds.), *Revelations of a Spirit Medium* (London, 1922). The book was first published in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1891, when all the copies were bought up by mediums: it was probably written by a certain Donovan. See editors' introduction, pp. xi-xv.

19. Maskelyne, *Spiritualism*, pp. 52 ff. Cf. Daniel Dunglas Home, *Incidents in my Life* (2nd series, London, 1872), pp. 197-374, for Home's version of the case.

20. Cf. Bryan Wilson, *Religion in a Secular Society* (London, paperback edition, 1969), p. 211-12.

21. C. Odhmer Sigstedt, *The Swedenborg Epic* (New York, 1952), pp. 232-4.

22. Robert Hindmarsh, *Rise and Progress of the New Jerusalem Church* (London, 1861), pp. 482-3.

23. For this process, see Odhmer Sigstedt, *Swedenborg*, pp. 178-80 and 185 ff.

24. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell* (London, 1958), pp. 116-18. *Swedenborg*, p. 117-118.

25. For these, see Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Spiritual Diary* (tr. G. Bush and J. H. Smithson, London, 1883), vol. I, p. 25. It is interesting to compare Swedenborg's attitude to his spiritual world with that of Gilbert White to the natural world.

26. And while in France, had made some apposite and caustic notes on the corruption of the Catholic clergy. See *Swedenborg*, p. 248.

27. Hindmarsh, *New Jerusalem Church*, pp. 251-2.

28. Margaret Goldsmith, *Franz Anton Mesmer* (London, 1934), pp. 46-8.

29. Goldsmith, *Mesmer*, pp. 55-61.

30. Quoted, Goldsmith, *Mesmer*, pp. 109-10.

31. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. I, pp. 54-5.

32. J. Milne Bramwell, *Hypnotism* (London, 1921), pp. 4-23.

33. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. I, p. 121.

34. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, pp. 76-7. Strictly speaking, Fru Lindquist was a "somnambule," a natural sleep-walker. This state was thought to be analagous to that of mesmeric trance.

35. I am indebted to Mr. Francis King for drawing my attention to the importance of Andrew Jackson Davis as social critic as well as Spiritualist propagandist.

36. G. Baseden Butt, "Andrew Jackson Davis," in *The Occult Review* (February 1925), p. 92.

37. Butt, "Davis," pp. 93-4. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. I, pp. 154-5.

38. Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Great Harmonia* (Boston and New York, 1862), vol. II, pp. 31-2 and note. Cf. Aldous Huxley, *Heaven and Hell* (London, paperback edition, 1965), p. 110: "Negative emotions—the fear which is the absence of confidence, the hatred, anger, or malice which exclude love—are the guarantee that the visionary experience, if and when it comes, shall be appalling."

39. Butt, "Davis," p. 94. Davis (*The Great Harmonia*), vol. II, pp. 53-8. Butt, "Davis," pp. 95 and 99. Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Harbinger of Health* (New York, 1862), p. 272.

40. See Butt, "Davis," p. 96; Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. I, p. 164, note 4.

41. Davis, *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations* (London, 1847), vol. I, p. 121.

42. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. I, p. 159.

43. John Chapman, Preface to Davis, *The Principles of Nature*, p. 5.

44. Davis, *The Principles of Nature*, vol. II, p. 679.

45. Davis, *The Principles of Nature*, p. 680.

46. Davis, *The Principles of Nature*, p. 699.

47. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. I, p. 158, note 3, and p. 167, note 1.

48. Davis, *The Principles of Nature*, vol. II, pp. 734 ff., 778-81, 715.

49. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. II, pp. 350-51; cf. vol. I, pp. 370-73.

50. See Davis, *A Stellar Key to the Summer-Land*, Part One (New York, 1868).

51. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. II, pp. 293-4.

52. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, pp. 18-23.

53. G. K. Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society* (London, 1969), p. 64. It is a great pity that this book does not apply the insights of sociology in a more inspired fashion: on most points the enquirer must return to Podmore.

54. Nelson, *Spiritualism*, p. 265.

55. Real name Léon-Dénizarth-Hippolyte Rivail.

56. See Allan Kardec, *The Spirits' Book* (tr. Anna Blackwell, London, 1875). This is a translation of the revised edition of 1857 which became the standard text for Spiritualists of the Kardec school.

57. Allan Kardec, *Imitation de l'Evangile selon le spiritisme*, (Paris, 1864).

58. Emma Hardinge Britten, *Nineteenth-Century Miracles*, (Manchester, 1884), pp. 350-51, p. 364.

59. The Imperial Archduke Johann of Austria, *Insight into Spiritualism* (tr. from 5th German edition by N_2O, 1885), pp. 9, 36.

60. An account of the episode is to be found on pp. 109-10 of *From an Eastern Embassy* (London, 1920). The anonymous authoress of these memoirs was married to a Frenchman in the Turkish diplomatic service, who was stationed in Berlin at the time when the séance took place. Despite the total lack of dating in the narrative, there seems little reason to doubt that the episode actually occurred. A review of the book in the *Daily Mail* of 20 March 1920 gives the date of the seance as "over twenty-five years ago."

61. In *The Spiritualist Magazine*. See Elizabeth Longford, *Victoria, R. I.* (London, 1964), pp. 336-7.

62. Longford, *Victoria, R. I.*, pp. 454-5. Short work is made of other rumors of Victoria's dealings with mediums and clairvoyants: see pp. 334-8.

63. *Report of the Committee on Spiritualism of the London Dialectical Society* (London, 1871), p. 229.

64. W. H. Salter, *The Society for Psychical Research, an Outline of its History* (London, 1946), pp. 5-6.

65. Salter, *Society for Psychical Research*, p. 13.

66. Trevor H. Hall, *The Spiritualists* (London, 1962), pp. 99-108.

67. Hall in John L. Campbell and Trevor H. Hall, *Strange Things* (London, 1968), p. 126, note 1.

68. Hall, *The Strange Case of Edmund Gurney* (London, 1964), pp. 104-24.

69. E.g., Alan Gauld, *The Founders of Psychical Research* (London, 1968), p. 82.

70. Hall, *The Strange Case of Edmund Gurney*, p. 107.

71. Hall in *Strange Things*, passim, but esp. pp. 98-100.

72. Frederic Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (London, 1903), vol. II, p. 281. Meyers apostrophized the material prosperity and security of his time, concluding, ". . . this very security, this very prosperity, do but bring out in stronger relief the underlying *Welt-Schmerz*, the decline of

any real belief in the dignity, the meaning, the endlessness of life" (p. 279). It would be hard to find a more telling case of a supposedly "scientific" researcher possessing preconceptions likely to influence the findings of his research. The bewailing of the human condition, and the flight from Reason, are very similar to the attitude of Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (London, 1899). But while Symons consoled himself with the mystical philosophy he believed quite rightly to be underlying Symbolist poetry, Myers took refuge in his "telepathic law." Despite the existential crisis, there was hope.

"Nay, in the infinite Universe man may now feel, for the first time, at home. The worst fear is over, the true security is won. The worst fear was the fear of spiritual extinction or spiritual solitude; the true security is in the telepathic law" (p. 281). Without further justification, Myers takes the hope he sees in this link between the disparate units of humanity and inflates it into a religion. The massive *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* ends with a *Provisional Sketch of a Religious Synthesis*. Such a synthesis, Myers believed to be in sight. In this hope he was at one with the divines of the 1893 Parliament of Religions (see Chapter 2, below). Even more significantly, the model he proposes under the name of the Religion of the Ancient Sage differs only in points of personal preference from countless other syncretisms formed from occult Tradition (see Chapter 6 and following chapters; Myers, *Human Personality*, pp. 284 ff.).

73. E. Garth Moore, *Survival, a reconsideration*, SPR Myers Memorial Lecture (London, 1966), p. 11.

74. William C. Hartmann, *Hartmann's Who's Who in Occult, Psychic and Spiritual Realms* (New York, 1927). Provides the only comprehensive survey of the territory.

75. Steward Wavell in *Trances*, by Wavell, Audrey Butt, and Nina Epton (London, 1966), p. 36.

76. Epton in *Trances*, p. 236.

77. See C. C. Evans and Edward Osborne, "Experiment in the electro-encephalography of Mediumistic Trance," in *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, vol. XXXVI, no. 669 (March-April 1952), pp. 588-96.

78. F. W. H. Myers, "Pseudo-Possession," in *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, XV-XXXVIII (Supplement), p. 390. On possession in general, see T. K. Österreich, *Possession* (London, 1930). For a description through an entranced medium

of how spirit communications are obtained, see C. Drayton Thomas, *The Modus Operandi of Trance Communication*—according to descriptions received through Mrs. Osborne Leonard—in *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, vol. XXXVIII, part 107, pp. 49-100. For correspondences between out of the body experiences and the mediumistic trance, see Sidney Alrutz, "The Mechanism of so-called Mediumistic Trance," in *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, XXXXIV-XCI, pp. 166-80.

79. For Hélène Smith, the analysis of Thomas Flournoy, *From India to the Planet Mars* (tr. D. B. Vermilye, London, and New York, 1900).

80. Flournoy, *From India*, pp. 190-95.

81. Myers, *Pseudo-Possession*, p. 415.

82. Audrey Butt in *Trances*, p. 181.

83. Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society*, p. 256. For the "burned-over district," see my Chapter 4.

Chapter 2
Babel

AT the same time as Spiritualist ideas began to spread throughout the Western world, others were seeking the solution to life's problems in the East. If the nature of their seeking was abortive, it is important to understand why.

We can do no better than begin with a speech made by Charles Carroll Bonney on 15 May 1893. Bonney's portrait shows him as a man with an egg-shaped head and a long straggly beard. His style of address was ponderous and

flatulent. In this story he plays the part of chorus, for he stands representative of so many qualities of his age. A minor economist, politician, and legal reformer, he seems to have reached his most prominent position as President of the Congress Auxiliary of the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago; a World's Fair which sprawled beside Lake Michigan like an immense film set. Outside the hall of the Congress there stood the first Ferris Wheel, helter-skelters, a captive balloon; Fine Arts exhibits, electrical and shoe-trades halls; Machinery, Mining and Manufactures; and the huge Krupp Gun building, crowned with a tower inscribed with the word *Deutschland* on all four faces, housing the Biggest Gun in the World. Inside the hall, there stood Bonney, orating. He proclaimed:

> The nineteenth century, richer in manifold wonders than any which has preceded it in the august procession of the ages, crowns its great achievements by establishing in the world the sublime idea of a Universal Fraternity of Learning and Virtue. This idea, long cherished by the *Illuminati* of every clime, descends at last from the luminous mountains of thought to the fertile fields of action, and enters upon the conquest of the world.[1]

Surrounded by manifold wonders from every part of the earth, the delegates could not but agree. If they had escaped becoming lost in Old Vienna, there were villages from Lapland, Ireland, and China to entrap them; while denying themselves the attractions of Hagenbeck's Circus, they had still to avoid the Eskimos, the cliff-dwellers and the mock-up of the Temple of Luxor. There was nonetheless a hope amongst some of the delegates present that they would resolve the problems of this confusion of culture. It is only mildly overstating the case to compare the atmosphere to that of the Congresses of Vienna or Versailles. At the more famous conferences, diplomats and statesmen were concerned with redefining the boundaries of nations, "spheres of influence," and matters of practical politics. In Chicago, the more optimistic, like Charles Bonney, were proposing in much the same fashion to

redraw the spiritual map of the world; and their well-intentioned efforts were equally unavailing.

But it is not to attach a false importance to the Parliament of Religions to treat it as a parable of the wider situation. The Parliament must be placed in a proper perspective. The 1893 Columbian Exposition had been conceived as a memorial to the voyage of 1492. It came a year late, largely because of rivalry among various American cities for the privilege of playing host. It was the latest of that succession of international exhibitions, begun by the London Exhibition of 1851 and continued in Paris, Vienna, and the USA. The 1851 Exhibition had welcomed over six million visitors: at Chicago over half this total was achieved in the course of three October days.[2] Had there been any tangible increase in good will among nations? The organizers of the Chicago Exhibition lugubriously noted that since 1851 there had been six wars in Europe, one in North America, and an unstipulated number in the south of that continent.[3] It seemed that the sublime ideas spoken of by Charles Bonney had become stuck in the luminous mountains.

It was characteristic of the age to attach to a trade fair the series of Congresses which were held at Chicago. The subjects for discussion form an index to the contemporary conscience. There were Congresses of Representative Women, of Medicine and Surgery; Congresses on Art, Philosophy, Commerce, and Education; a Temperance Congress, and a Congress on Evolution. Largest, most successful, and attracting by far the most attention was the World Parliament of Religions, where Shinto priests discoursed to African bishops, Buddhist monks lectured at Cumberland Baptists; Theosophists, Confucians, and Christian Scientists "found their hands clasped in one unbroken circle."[4] How unbroken this circle was remains to be seen; but the fiction was maintained at least for the public of 140,000 who attended the Parliament, many remaining oblivious, day after day, to what one of the organizers called "the prodigious array of the glories of the material world, within easy reach of them."[5] At the close of the Parliament ticket

touts made fortunes by selling seats in the overflow hall.[6] The interest shown can be explained in part by the exoticism of some of the beliefs expounded, in part by the general crisis. But the chief reason has to do with the emergence of the Orient in Western thought.

The encounter of East and West was even by 1893 viewed by only a tiny minority of educated persons in the West as much more than the natural expansion of European man. Since the early 19th century, however, a small group of intellectuals had drawn inspiration from the Orient, and later their influence was in its turn to be diffused. To a certain extent there existed a recognition that Oriental religion embodied the aspirations of many more human beings than did Christianity in Europe, and the Romantic affection for the mysterious East had taken account of a centuries-old tradition of Oriental wisdom. It is of interest to compare the reactions of East and West to their encounter.

The West came as material conquerors and largely for material ends. In the East there was no developed technology with which to defend cultures incomparably more ancient than those of the invaders. To the Chinese, to whom all foreigners were barbarians, this impotence rankled. A theory grew up, known as the "self-strengthening" policy, by which it was argued that the Chinese Confucian way of life, although undoubtedly superior in every way to that of the barbarians, would best be protected if the Chinese were to learn from the invaders the Western means of self-defense. The *substance* of Chinese culture could be preserved by the use of Western *methods*. Opponents of the "self-strengthening" theory, such as Wo-jen (died 1871) retorted that the use of Western *methods* would end by the adoption of the *substance* of barbarian culture.[7]

In the West there was no doubt about the superiority of technology—and little about the superiority of Western man. Outside the British Raj those Westerners who had had direct contact with Orientals were relatively few. But as a consequence of the Age of Reason certain people began to look for a stable frame of reference in the unchanging East; and this abandonment of rationalism and espousal of other

categories of thought is best understood in the context of the Chinese policy of "self-strengthening." For those who chose this road there was the abandonment of the deficient *substance* of Western culture in favor of the *substance* of the East which seemed to give spiritual satisfaction to so many.

On the same principle, the Japanese response to the West—which was exactly the reverse of that of the "self-strengthening"—took the form of a widespread reassertion of the national *substance*. From the religious point of view this meant a resurgence of Shintoism, and the growth from the beginning of the Meiji era (1868) of a number of new religions in response to the sense of crisis. One such was *Omoto*, which dates its inception from 1 January 1892, when Mrs. Nao Deguchi felt herself possessed of a god and began producing automatic script and effecting remarkable cures. An earlier and much more powerful religion—claiming in 1962 over 2,300,000 members and a strong political party—was founded by Mrs. Miki Mahayama, who also had been possessed by a god, the Heavenly General. This was *Tenrikyo*, whose beliefs are tinged with millenarianism: one day the "sweet dew" will descend from heaven, and man will walk in righteousness.*

This directly supernaturalist form of belief could be found also in the West; and it was from India that most Westerners tempted by the Oriental approach were to draw their inspiration. This was chiefly because of the activities of an extraordinary band of scholars, but also because India had known the ways of the West for much longer than any other part of the Orient. There had been made some attempts at a synthesis of Indian and Western thought which made alien modes of thinking more accessible to the white man. The *Brahmo Samaj* and the *Arya Samaj* are examples of such efforts. The *Brahmo Samaj* was founded by Rajah Rammohun Roy, a fervent Anglophile, who died in England in 1833. It was seen by uncomprehending missionaries as being a movement away from idolatry toward Theism, but was more an attempt to reconcile East and West by the fusion of the Christian Gospels and the Hindu

Vedanta[9]—an occupation later to become popular with the Theosophists. By one account the idea of the *Brahmo Samaj* had actually been suggested to its founder by Protestant missionaries, and embodied an order of service modelled on that of Protestant Christianity.[10] The *Arya Samaj* had resulted from a split in the earlier organization, and under its leader Dayananda Saraswati claimed to return to the purity of the unadulterated Vedas; but in this doctrine God was still that of the Christian tradition—monotheist and Protestant . . .[11] Vedanta known under either of these guises was scarcely Vedanta, however acceptable it might appear to the West. P. Mozoomdar of Calcutta represented the *Brahmo Samaj* at the World's Parliament of Religions; and it was the attraction of the *Arya Samaj* that brought the founders of the Theosophical Society to India.[12]

Scholarly interest in Oriental thought dates from the foundation in 1784 of the "Asiatick Society of Bengal" by William Jones, under the patronage of Warren Hastings. The next year appeared Charles Wilkins's translation of the *Bhagavad Gita,* and under the auspices of the Society a succession of translations found their way to the West, to France and Germany as well as England. The journal of the Society, *Asiatick Researches,* was so well received in London that a pirated edition was brought out. The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland was founded in 1823, and five years later the Oriental Translation Fund began to ensure a continued flow of Oriental texts to the West. Knowledge of other Oriental languages than Sanskrit grew: alien literatures and enigmatic inscriptions lost something of their inscrutability. The 1785 translations from Sanskrit were followed by those of 1793 from Pehlevi, of 1803 from cuneiform, of 1822 from hieroglyphs, and of ten years later from Zend. With the work of Hodgson, the East India Company agent in Nepal, and others, such as the Hungarian Count Csoma of Koros, Buddhism began to replace the Vedas as the object of the highest scholarly attention. Other languages began to receive academic recognition; for example, the College de France appointed Abel Remusat in 1814 as the first professor of Chinese.

Greece and Rome were displaced as the sole sources of wisdom: Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805), the translator of the *Oupnek'hat*—a very influential compilation of material from the Vedas and the Upanishads—made in 1808 the comparison between the discovery of the Orient, and the rediscovery of the classics in the first Renaissance.[13]

It was inevitable that the phenomenon which anthropologists call "culture shock" should make itself felt as a result of serious considerations of the ideas of the "subject races." Wilkins' translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* was in particular able to shock assumptions of racial superiority. To make alien ideas more intelligible, commentators discovered in the traditions of the Orient a dozen Western philosophies—for example, one French critic found in the *Gita* Stoicism, Illuminism, Spinoza, and Berkeley.[14] This is not to say that similar teachings are not there. It was inevitable that Eastern teachings should filter through to the West in a popularized or romantic form. Thus Edwin Arnold's publication in 1879 of the remarkably successful *The Light of Asia*—a verse translation of a life of Buddha—was in the short term much more effective than scholarly works in directing the attention of a large public to Buddhist doctrines. And that debased Romanticism which saw in the "primitive" the noble savage in a sinless state was by the end of the 19th century a part of popular mythology. There has been in England, for example, a direct line of romantic adventurers who have sought consolation in an alien society, and who have been idolized for it. From Byron and the Greeks, through Wilfred Scawen Blunt and the Arabs, to T. E. Lawrence's own relationship with Arabia, the kinship is clear. Most people, of course, had neither the opportunity nor the conviction to become corsairs or sheikhs overnight.

To attempt to trace the influence of the new currents of thought on philosophers or literati would be a thankless task. A few examples will indicate the situation. Among the German Romantics, the Oriental revelations were hailed as confirming their innate premonitions about the nature of life. *Asiatick Researches* was well known in the circle of Novalis; Schelling interpreted Sir William Jones' transla-

tion of the *Gita-Govinda* as revealing the secret of human existence. "In the Orient," announced Friederich Schlegel, "we must look for the pinnacle of Romanticism."[15] Eight years later (1808) he published the *Essay on the language and wisdom of the Hindus,* the first attempt at interpreting Indian civilization on a broad canvas. At the age of twenty-five Schopenhauer was introduced to the *Oupnek'hat,* and progressed to Buddhist philosophy. In America as in Europe, the new wisdom had made influential converts. The group of New Englanders gathered round the "Transcendental Club" were powerfully influenced by Oriental thought. Emerson, though far from accepting the system of the Vedanta in its entirety, believed that the Eastern idea of *Maya*—that the material world is an illusion—was fundamental to any philosophy, and adapted other concepts to suit his own premises. Thoreau, who during the years 1845-7 retired to live the simple life at Walden Pond, thought of himself as a yogi. A more direct link is provided by the marriage of Fannie Channing, the daughter of another member of the "Transcendental Club," to Edwin Arnold of *The Light of Asia.*[16] Scholars were no less prone than men of letters to becoming converts to the doctrines they studied. Max Müller, whose *Sacred Books of the East* started to appear in 1879, told Swami Vivekananda in 1896 that if he returned to India, his friends would have to cremate him there.[17]

Vivekananda was one of the greatest successes at the Parliament of Religion. The message of the Swami was derived from that of Sri Ramakrishna, of whom Christopher Isherwood is "at least strongly inclined to believe that he was what his disiples declared he was: an incarnation of God upon earth."[18] Ramakrishna—born near Calcutta in 1836, died in *samadhi*° at Cossipore, in

° *Samadhi* is the ecstatic trance of the knower of Brahman—more strictly speaking, such a trance at death is known as *mahasamadhi;* when the enlightened person leaves the final body in his series of reincarnations.

1886—was an ecstatic with a remarkable grasp of the realities of life. His message was that of universal brotherhood. "I say that we are all calling on the same God. Jealousy and malice need not be." "Do you know what truth is?" he asked his disciples. "God has made different religions to suit different aspirants, times and countries."[19] Ramakrishna's wife, Sri Sarada Devi, whom he had married at the age of five, is revered by his devotees as "Holy Mother," and Ramakrishna worshipped her himself as the Goddess Sarasvati.[20] To the end of her life in 1920 she was attended by an Englishwoman, Margaret Noble, who had taken the name of Sister Nivedita. It is significant that the West was becoming so sensitive, not only to ancient wisdoms, but to the first stirrings of new religions.

Vivekananda adapted his master's teachings for public consumption in the West. In his mouth the message became, as René Guénon writes, both moralistic, and consolingly sentimental.[21] In terms of individual conversions the impact of Vivekananda's movement was probably not very large; but in his lifetime, and entirely because of the impression he made on those he met, his role in the diffusion of Vedanta-inspired doctrine was of great importance. Annie Besant recorded hearing someone say after listening to the Swami, "That man a heathen! And we send missionaries to his people! It would be more fitting that they should send missionaries to us!" On this topic Vivekananda was emphatic. "As regards spirituality, the Americans are far inferior to us, but their society is far superior to ours. We will teach them our spirituality, and assimilate what is best in their society."[22]

The resemblance to the Chinese "self-strengtheners" is marked; and the counter-argument could also well be employed, that by adopting what was best in Western society, the spirituality upon which Vivekananda placed such emphasis might also be contaminated. The Swami had an ironic introduction to the United States. "Hail Columbia!" he cried at Chicago, "Motherland of liberty! It has been given to thee, who never dipped her hand in her

neighbor's blood, who never found out that the shortest way of becoming rich was by robbing one's neighbors, it has been given to thee to march at the vanguard of civilization with the flag of harmony!" It was quite in the style of oratory favored by the Parliament, but it was unfortunate that Vivekananda should discover a few weeks later that the manager of his American lecture tours was cheating him by about $2,300 at each appearance.

Vivekananda twice visited Europe, where he attended the Paris Exhibition of 1900, visited Max Müller at Oxford, and traveled to Constantinople in company with Père Hyacinthe Loyson, the Carmelite monk who had renounced his vows and married. Everywhere he spread sweetness and light. To Max Müller he went humbly to "pay his respects." In the Alps he offered flowers to a statue of the Virgin in a mountain chapel, "for she also is the Mother." (With becoming diffidence he had a Westerner offer them for him, for fear Christian worshippers would be annoyed.[23]) In America his work more quickly showed practical results. The Vedanta Society of America dates its foundation to Vivekananda's work in New York in the year following the Parliament of Religions, and by 1904 there were centers in San Francisco and Los Angeles. By 1916 the Californian center had developed several subsidiaries, and further centers had opened at Boston, Pittsburgh, Washington, and Connecticut. At these centers, or *ashrama,* the Indian swamis were more guests than missionaries and the organization was run by native Americans who had invited the holy men to become their spiritual directors.[24] This is important, because it serves to illustrate the point that the missionary traditions so dear to Western Christendom are totally alien to the spirit of Hindu thought. Vivekananda came because he was invited. Although he may have sugared the pill in accordance with the susceptibility of his audience, he did not himself decide to embark on a missionary program. The Swami cannot altogether be acquitted of the charge of preaching; but it remains true to state that he who puts himself under a *guru*

does so voluntarily, and that only Islam and Christianity have been actively missionary religions in modern times. Thus the presence in the West at this time of even a small number of converts to Vedanta is much more significant than would have been, say, the mass conversion to Christianity of an African tribe. It supports the assertion that people were actively looking for solutions to the problems posed by rationalism; and that those who turned to the East for their answers were in earnest.

Vivekananda taught that each and every religion had its own appointed time and place. There was, however, yet another new faith which expounded more explicitly the unity of all religions. Such assurances had an obvious appeal in times of uncertainty. But the Baha'i revelation had an added attraction for the West, where centuries of Christian predominance had strictly circumscribed the notion of what a religion might be. More than any revelation since the Christian, the circumstances surrounding the origins of the Baha'i faith possess the qualities of poetic myth. The creed boasts countless martyrs and two incarnations of God. Its history begins in 1844 in the Persian city of Shiraz, where a twenty-five-year-old merchant called Mirza Ali Mohammed proclaimed his mission as a divine messenger. His original and spectacular success in winning converts has obtained for him the position of John the Baptist in the Baha'i faith, in which he is always known a the Bab, or gate. He is nevertheless looked on as a true Incarnation of God sent, as it were, to prepare the way for himself. In the face of the Bab's disturbing effect upon the faithful of Islam, and his adoption of titles normally given only to the Prophet himself, the Persian and Turkish authorities mounted a ferocious persecution. Eventually they captured the Bab who seems to have realized, just as Christ perhaps realized, that there was only one way to end his ministry.

The Grand Vizir of the Shah ordered the Bab to be shot. The story of the execution has the appeal of the greatest of religious myths. When the summons to the firing squad came to the Bab, the condemned prophet was having a last

conversation with his amanuensis, Said Husein. To the insistent official the Bab replied, "Not until I have said to him all those things that I have to say can any earthly power silence Me." Nevertheless, he was led off to face his executioners, an entire regiment, under the command of an Armenian Christian colonel, whom the reports suggest was half-way to admitting the divinity of the man he was about to shoot. To him the Bab said: "Follow your instructions, and if your intention be sincere, the Almighty is surely able to relieve you of your great perplexity." With a young disciple, Anis, who had begged to share his fate, the Bab was suspended by a rope above the ground, and the regiment opened fire in three ranks, rank following rank in the fashion of a British infantry square.

When the smoke from 750 rifles had cleared the Bab was nowhere to be found. The young disciple, Anis, was standing on the ground with the rope that had held him severed. Forthwith the Armenian colonel resigned his command. After a frantic search, the Bab was found in the room from which he had originally been taken. He was talking to his amanuensis. He allowed himself once more to be led away, remarking only, "I have finished my conversation with Said Husein." This time there was no mistake, and the bodies of the Bab and Anis were "completely dissected" by bullets. Immediately, according to Baha'i tradition, a violent gale blew over the city, and for a day a dust-storm blotted out the sun.[25]

The parallels with Christian legend are obvious. The Armenian colonel corresponds to the centurion with the lance. The miracle of the first execution, the combination of divine imperiousness and meek acquiescence, are all in accordance with what the West knew of divinity. The Baha'i faith derived great impetus from these poetic origins. The bodies of the Bab and Anis were stolen from under the eyes of the guard placed on them, hidden, and eventually buried on the slopes of Mount Carmel.

Such correspondence may help to explain the interest eventually taken in the West in the Baha'i faith. Political

circumstances were also favorable. The cruel persecutions to which the followers of the Bab were subjected were partly the result of the attempted assassination of the Shah by two fanatical Babis in 1852. There is a letter from an Austrian officer, who resigned from the Shah's service because of the cruelties he witnessed, which describes the horrors most graphically. The heretics were made to eat their own amputated ears, had their heads beaten in with hammers, and were forced to run with lighted wicks placed in holes gouged in their bodies, or with their feet shod with horseshoes.[26] Lord Curzon rightly thought that such cruelties in fact spurred the movement on as nothing else could have done. The Tsar instructed his consul at Tabriz to report on the Babis, and France was introduced to the sufferings of the unfortunate heretics by the Comte de Gobineau. Romantic sympathy with the persecuted made the Bab a hero. A Russian poetess wrote a play about the prophet which profoundly affected Tolstoy; and in Paris Sarah Bernhardt badgered Catulle Mendès for a play of her own.[27]

During the persecutions, one of those cast into jail was the son of a minister of the Shah. In prison he discovered that he was the manifestation of God proclaimed by his martyred leader. On his release he spent two years in the wilderness, and in 1863 declared himself, taking the name of Baha'u'llah—the Glory of God. Baha'u'llah is the central figure of the Baha'i faith, and most of the adherents of the Bab transferred their allegiance to him. This cannot conceal the fact that the Bab had himself nominated Baha'u'llah's half-brother, Mirza Yahya, as his successor; and that almost from its inception the faith which proclaims the unity of all religions has itself been beset by schism.[28] It was Baha'u'llah, however, who gave shape to the doctrines of the Faith. The vicissitudes of his career ended with his imprisonment by the Turks in Acre, where it was hoped that the noxious climate would soon make a convenient end. In fact, this merely strengthened the position of the Baha'is. The Incarnate Lord, inaccessible in his prison city, bom-

barded the world with messages, addressed to Napoleon III, Alexander of Russia, Queen Victoria, and the Presidents of Various South American Republics. Brotherhood, love, unity, were the burden of his message. He wrote:

> These attributes of God are not, and never have been, vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets and withheld from others. Nay, all the Prophets of God, His well-favored, His holy and chosen Messengers, are without exception, the wearers of His names and the embodiments of His attributes. They only differ in the intensity of their revelation and the comparative potency of their light.[29]

After the death of Baha'u'llah in 1893, his son, Abbas Effendi, afterwards known as Abdul Baha, became the bearer of the message. Abdul Baha is looked on as something between God and Man: he was not divine, but was as much above ordinary humanity as God was above him. Among his Western devotees this reverential attitude was also found. For Abdul Baha, released from his own incarceration in Acre, arrived in Europe. He came to London in September 1911. "He arrived," wrote Lady Bloomfield, one of his most fervent disciples, "and who shall picture him?" In London he received Bertram Keightly of the Theosophical Society, W. T. Stead, formerly of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the occult magazine *Borderlands*, and Mrs. Pankhurst, to whom he prophesied that women would soon achieve their rightful place in the world. Abdul Baha visited Scotland, then travelled through Europe and America. In London, his success seems to have surpassed Vivekananda's—and doubtless the uses of the schismatic Baha'i Faith were appreciated as of political importance—for by the time of Allenby's advance on Haifa in the First World War, the Baha'i leader had become an object of anxious concern to the British authorities, to whose notice powerful friends of the Faith had brought the disturbing fact that the Turks had threatened, if they lost Jerusalem, to crucify Abdul Baha and his family on Mount Carmel. Arthur Balfour cabled Allenby to ensure his safety. When

the city fell, the extraordinary telegram was received in London from Allen by:

> "Have today taken Palestine. Notify the world that Abdul Baha is safe."[30]

The West had discovered the Baha'i Faith long before Abdul Baha's visits. A Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, whose name was Edward Granville Browne, had contrived a year or two before the prophet's death to penetrate the prison-sanctum of Baha'u'llah at Acre and talk with the Incarnation himself.

> The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and the face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood. . . .[31]

Browne published details of the Bab's career in 1891, and by 1897 France, Germany, England, and the USA had seen translations of Baha'i literature. In the United States, the Baha'i religion had first been expounded by Dr. Ibrahim Khayrullah, who in February 1894 had begun missionary work in Chicago, whence he expanded his field of operations to include New York. The *New York Times* of December 1904 reported the interest taken by unlikely quarters in the cause; there had been present at the meeting attended by their reporter "a score of men who have business in the Wall Street district and on both Broadway and Fifth Avenue." Khayrullah's undoubted success seems explicable even in terms of pure mystification: his lectures were most confused, including information on the mystic significance of the number nine, and the promise to explain why the navel opening was "locked."[32] This ultimate secret was never revealed, but the fashion for such mystical enigmas which was being set by the Theosophical Society evidently found support.

An unfortunate schism took place, however, between Khayrullah and Abdul Baha. The missionary made the journey to Acre with an intrepid Californian, Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, and her friend Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper, the first Baha'i in the British Isles. Khayrullah was at first made welcome by Abdul Baha, who called him "Baha'i's Peter," and seemed to favor him. But it transpired that there were doctrinal differences between Peter and his master. These eventually came to a head in a dispute over the nature of the Godhead in which Abdul Baha was not able to cow Khayrullah into obedience. Khayrullah began to feel himself badly treated, and soon decided that Abdul Baha was claiming an unsubstantiated divinity and teaching against the doctrines of his father. He caught out the leader of his faith in a fraudulent prophecy, and transferred his allegiance to another schismatic group—that of Abdul Baha's brother, evidently intent on emulating the success of Baha'u'llah. Nonetheless, the power of the official leader of the faith enabled Abdul Baha to win over almost all of Khayrullah's converts, and "Baha'i's Peter" was compelled to watch his efforts in America diverted into the service of the Baha'i establishment.[33]

At the World Parliament of Religions, the Baha'i Faith had barely been mentioned; but the context in which it was noted is interesting. Dr. Henry Jessupp, a missionary from Beirut, closed his speech with a quotation from Baha'u'llah, of whom he spoke in the most approving terms. "'These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come." So the saint had spoken to Granville Browne. "Don't you in Europe need this also? Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country, let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind."[34]

Inspiring sentiments, Dr. Jessupp! But it seems as though the Reverend Doctor has forgotten the title of his address. It is "The Religious Mission of the English-speaking nations." "*Enfin*," complained a French observer, analyzing the deficiencies of the Parliament of Religions, "an Anglo-Saxon Protestant celebrated the superior qualities of his

race and religion in a manner which showed small consideration for those whose nationality and beliefs did not happen to be his own."[35] Everything, it appeared to Dr. Jessupp, had combined to fit the Anglo-Saxon race for its Divine Mission. "Was it an accident," he asked his audience in Chicago, "that North America fell to the lot of the Anglo-Saxon race, that vigorous Northern people of brain and brawn, of faith and courage, of order and liberty?" Of course it was not. They, led by their greatest men—General Gordon is especially lauded—will answer the call of the Divine Voice to lead the world from paganism.[36] Unfortunately this speech of Jessupp well represents the tone of the Parliament, in which benevolence and bigotry, piety and pudeur were so strangely in combination, and to which we must return.

The proceedings opened with the best of intentions. For seventeen days holy men of several nations discoursed learnedly on religious topics. Of the importance of the occasion in the eyes of contemporaries there is no doubt. In the official history of the Exposition, the report on the Parliament runs to over one hundred pages, appreciably more than the sixty pages of the educationalists, the fifty of the Evolutionary Congress, even the seventy-five odd devoted to Representative Women. But the whole concept of a Parliament of Religions was uncertain from the outset. Despite messages of encouragement from such diverse quarters as Mr. Gladstone and Count Matteo Prochet of the Evangelical Waldensian Church, there remained a substantial body of Christian opinion—and after all, it was the Christians who had called and were throughout to dominate. the Parliament—which was opposed to any dealings whatsoever with the heathen save at the point of a crucifix. Edward White Benson wrote from his see of Canterbury:

> I am afraid that I cannot write the letter which, in yours of March 20th, you wish me to write, expressing a sense of the importance of the proposed conference, without its appearing to be an approval of the scheme. The difficulties which I myself

> feel are not questions of distance or convenience, but rest on the fact that the Christian religion is the one religion.[37]

He could tolerate no exposure of those areas of faith "which belong to a region too sacred for treatment." A certain fear of the harm which had already been done by well-meaning modernist clergymen is easily detectable. The fiercest opposition to the idea of holding the Parliament had come from the missionaries, whose entire rationale would be exploded if any genuine rapprochement of creeds were to take place. One from Hong Kong issued a stern warning against "playing fast and loose with the truth, and coquetting with false religions." He gave his correspondents, he said, the credit for the best intentions, "but let me warn you that you are unconsciously planning treason against Christ." The Christian position was of course traditionally fixed—it was the "one religion," and as such committed to the conversion of the heathen. But the fact that the Parliament was called at all illustrates the dichotomy that had developed within the churches, with the extreme conservative opinion confronted by those who would either compromise with the scientific approach, or extend the principle of toleration outside Christendom. Even the traditional policies of the churches in defense of their Truth were being questioned: there was no certainty even here where all should have been most certain. Neither would the guardians of Islam depart from their own dogmatic position, and the Koran found its only interpreters among Christian priests.

Despite this basic disadvantage, and despite the fact that the bulk of the delegates were Christians of one or another denomination, the opening session of the Parliament (on 11 September 1893) did its best to present a truly cosmopolitan appearance. The most Reverend Dionysius Latas, Archbishop of Zante in Greece, introduced P. C. Mozoomdar of Calcutta for the *Brahmo Samaj;* four Shinto priests from Japan were spoken for by an interpreter, and the Honorable Pung Kwung Uu, the delegate of the Chinese

Emperor, was not. Count Bernstorff disclaimed any authority to speak for his Evangelical Church or his country, and Prince Serge Wollonsky did likewise.[38] It was apparent that no one had authority to speak for anyone but himself. But negotiation was not really the purpose of the assembly.

The Parliament drew crowds throughout its existence. Most interest was aroused by the Roman Catholics and the Buddhists, the latter headed by Dharmapala of Ceylon. Of the individual congresses which took place after the Parliament proper, those of the Theosophists and the Christian Scientists were the most popular. In the Scientific Section a Catholic priest from Paris, Father D'Arby, proclaimed rashly: "We love science. The office of science in religion is to prune it of fantastic growths. Without science, religion would become superstition."[39] The Congress on Evolution, significantly, was grouped under the heading of religion, and on the last day of the Parliament Professor Henry Drummond, author of *Natural Law in the Spirit World*, rose to speak on Evolution and Christianity. The discoveries of Natural History, he said, had swept away the direct interpretation of Genesis, but there was a great design still visible in the whole of creation, to which even T. H. Huxley admitted.[40] In the minds of those who assembled for the closing session there was the expectation that something great would come of the experiment. After all, there had only been one awkward moment, when some women had violently protested against Moslem polygamy.[41]

But some of the foreign delegates were not so sanguine. They must have realized the equivocal tenor of the Parliament. Seventeen days of beginning proceedings with the Lord's Prayer would have enlightened them if nothing else had. Vivekananda must have expressed the feelings of several present when he issued his warning during the closing session.

> Much has been said of the common ground of religious unity, I am not going just now to venture my own theory. But if anyone

> here hopes that this unity will come about by the triumph of any one of those religions and the destruction of the others, to him I say, "Brother, yours is an impossible hope." Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid.

The Parliament historian noted: "Swami Vivekananda was always heard with interest by the Parliament, but very little approval was shown to some of the sentiments expressed in his closing address." Much more to the taste of the organizers was the picturesque farewell given by the Japanese delegation, who hoped that "the eight million deities protecting the cherry-tree country of Japan may protect you and your government for ever . . ."[42]; or even the hearty condemnation of politics and politicians voiced by Wollonsky.

Many and pious were the hopes that a new day was dawning. The euphuistic Bonney saw the Parliament as the fulfillment of the biblical prophecy that God would make all things new.[43] After an emotional speech by Prince Momolo Masequoi of the Vey Territory, the choir sang the Hallelujah Chorus, and the crowd went wild. "Three thousand men and women rose to their feet, waving their handkerchiefs and cheering, and not until the chorus had sung *Judge me, O God* (Mendelssohn), was quiet restored."[44] The proceedings conluded with the singing of *Lead Kindly Light* and *America.* The most enthusiastic tributes came from those who said it reminded them of the good old revivalist meetings. The organizers were convinced that they had started an earth-shaking movement; and the Secretary proposed a Parliament to be held in 1900 in Benares.

But noting came of it. Nothing could come of it. The Roman Catholic Church was the only religious body considered by the organizers of the conference to have had official representation; but the Papal Legate to the United States took no part in the proceedings, although he delivered an address to the Catholic congress a week later.

Rome, with her customary diplomacy, had allowed minor American ecclesiastics to organize their representation without committing the Holy See.[45] When it was proposed to continue the Parliament at the Paris Exhibition of 1900, it was rumored that it had been papal influence which had turned the proposal to that of a Conference on the History of Religions, whose brief was not to consider doctrine at all.[46] Yet the Conference of 1900 administered a small rebuff to the traditionalists when it passed a resolution directing the attention of scholars to Christian churches which had developed outside the influence of Greece and Rome, and noted that it was almost entirely on Greek or Roman documents that knowledge of Christianity was founded.[47] Other traditions were being called in to reinforce the tottering native edifice: sometimes with this implicit intention, but more often simply because they were there. As the partial quality of time-honored explanations of the world was becoming obvious in the field of the natural sciences, so the discovery of other interpretations of the big questions of philosophy and religion made traditional solutions seem ever more partial. The Parliament could not result in any religious rapprochement between East and West because of its very composition; and it would be a mistake to see the occasion as anything more than symbolic of the attitudes adopted by a far wider public to the problems posed in Chicago.

The occasion could and did act as a focus for discussion. Probably more important than the Parliament itself was the discussion and interest it aroused, particularly in the English-speaking world. The participants were all too ready to be swept up in a tide of warm and glowing feeling to see the realities of their position. The bishop who decided that the idea of holding the Parliament had been "a divine one rather than a human"[48] was typical of these. An American ecclesiastic, writing in the year of the Parliament, assessed the effect of the proceedings in these terms: "It was made evident that enlightened Christendom need never hereafter imagine that heathendom is simply 'a mass of degraded and

corrupt superstitions'. . . ."[49] The cards, in fact, had been put on the table, and the prospect of Asia revealed to those who were not first and foremost men of ideas, or those knowingly in search of a faith, or devotees of Eastern religion.

Such a prospect might terrify as much as it might enthrall. The concept of "culture-shock" has already been mentioned; and if the idea is considered in terms of the impact of the East on the West, a variety of reactions are seen to be possible. The Chinese reacted with their "self-strengthening," the Japanese by reasserting national traditions. Similarly, the Westerner might borrow from the East to reinforce the structure of his own tradition. Such were the scholar-converts and some of those responsible for calling the Parliament of Religions. Or he might react to the shock of discovering alien but workable methods of living, by retreating to an extremely conservative position. This was the attitude that the Catholic Church was to adopt; as it was the attitude of most of the Christian churches. The variable here was the degree of Protestantism. It is noticeable that the delegates to the Parliament of Religions who were most sanguine about the prospects of a dialogue between East and West were, like the bishop who thought that the hand of God was to be seen in the design, of a dissenting temperament. The extremes of missionary opinion discernible at the Parliament might also owe something to this instinctive reaction. There were other possibilities. Encounter with an alien faith might neither produce conversion nor a precipitate return to the arms of the Mother Church. For different reasons the experience might produce reconversion, but not through fear; rather through a form of shame. Richard Griffiths traces the sort of impact which the encounter with Islam had on certain French Catholic authors. The shock of meeting a faith both real and strong turned them from disgust with the tepid religion of their own heritage to a fully-experienced Catholicism.[50] It was thus possible to be persuaded, not by alien beliefs, but by the very fact that faith continued in lands where the

rationalist attack had not yet penetrated. Most disturbingly, the Westerner could experience culture-shock in the simplest of forms. The discovery of systems of belief so different to those he had come already to mistrust might merely increase the panic which he felt at the realities of the great world. The possibilities were too diverse, the view of the void too clear. This reaction would only accentuate the intensity of his crisis of consciousness.

It is striking that the motif of religious unity should play such a large part in the thought of this time. Recalling Lord Acton's vision of the ultimate universal history, it appears to have been the hope of at least a vocal minority that some form of religious consensus could be achieved. Vivekananda's insistence on the policy of live and let live is less surprising than the emphasis placed upon the unity of all religions by the un-Westernized Baha'is. At the Parliament the only attempt to formulate articles of agreement for all the creeds was made by an orthodox Hindu, M. N. D'vivedi, who proposed two factors as common to all religions. These were: (1) belief in the existence of an ultra-material principle in nature, and in the unity of the all; and (2) belief in reincarnation and salvation by action.[31] Patently he had little understanding of Christianity; and the very opposition of his two basic principles to the fundamental beliefs of Western Christendom shows that even in the realm of good intentions such harmony could never be achieved. The desire for it was the outcome of misunderstanding Eastern teachings and of that belief in "progress" which in retrospect seems like an optimism in the face of overwhelming odds.

To simplify grossly, one of the basic differences between the Eastern and Western approaches was and is the attitude to Matter. The West has achieved substantial victory over its environment: the ethics of capitalism and hard work have enabled the growth of technology. This sort of civilization is produced by the conviction that Matter is real and can be made real use of. In the East such a society has not spontaneously developed; and one of the reasons is that

Matter is often regarded as illusion—*Maya* in the Hindu term. It can thus have no use at all; and the chief task of a man is to free himself from its enchantment. The object of being constantly reborn in Matter is finally to be reborn no more. In the achieving of this liberation from Matter, the soul is also freed from the burden of the individual self: the individual is either annihilated, or absorbed in the Divine. Western civilization, on the other hand, is so strongly individualistic that the Self is glorified and paid respect. One of the attractions of Eastern doctrines for the West in the late 19th century was the denial of matter and the abolition of self. In reaction from the world which Western values had created and maintained—in reaction from the consequences of facing rationally the position of one tiny self against the void—it was natural that the Eastern approach would recommend itself to some small groups of people. Matter became illusion. The personal self was sloughed, or regarded as itself Divine and impregnable.

Such doctrines in their pure aspect were, however, too alien to command any real popular attention. When Allan Kardec, on the other hand, made reincarnation a part of his Spiritualist theories, there was no obstacle to widespread acceptance of the idea, which had been simplified and garnished with the appeal of the miraculous.

It was not Eastern doctrine which chiefly appealed to the West, but Oriental exoticism, perfumes, incense, spices, and a hint of the sort of mysticism which need not be explained too much. It has been observed that the societies most dominated by religious motivations are those which admit many different gods, rites, and mysteries into their conception of the divine; and that Christianity, in destroying the lush variety of pagan superstition, weakened altogether the conditions for religious belief.[52] To the most popular of the new revelations which sprang from the cultivation of the East, exoticism and diversity of belief were common stocks-in-trade.

1. Rossiter Johnson (ed.), *A History of the World's Columbian Exposition* (New York, 1898), vol. IV, p. 8.
2. Johnson, *World's Columbian Exposition*, vol. I, p. 485.
3. Johnson, *World's Columbian Exposition*, pp. 8-9.
4. Johnson, *World's Columbian Exposition*, vol. IV, p. 222.
5. J. H. Barrows (ed.), *The World's Parliament of Religions* (Chicago, 1893), vol. II, p. 1558; vol. I, p. 112.
6. Barrows, *Parliament of Religions*, vol. I, p. 158.
7. Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate* (London, 1958), vol. I. For the "self-strengtheners," see pp. 59-64; for Wo-jen, p. 70. For further illustrations of Chinese attitudes, see Ssu-uü Teng and John K. Fairbank (eds.), *China's Response to the West* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), pp. 46-59.
8. For the New Religions, see Clark B. Offner and Henry Van Straelen, *Modern Japanese Religions* (Leiden, 1963). The response of *Tenrikyo* might be compared with that of "primitive" cargo-cults of the South Pacific.
9. Frank Lillingston, *The Brahmo-Samaj and Arya Samaj* (London, 1901), passim. Cf. Raymond Schwab, *La renaissance orientale* (Paris, 1950), p. 261.
10. René Guénon, *Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines* (tr. Marco Pallis, London, 1945), p. 323.
11. Lillingston, *Brahmo-Samaj*, pp. 108-9; cf. Guénon, *Hindu Doctrines*, pp. 323-4.
12. See my next chapter.
13. Raymond Schwab, *La renaissance orientale*, pp. 58 ff., 121-2, 20-21. Schwab's compendious analysis has left me greatly in its debt, but it is weighted somewhat heavily toward the French literati for comprehensiveness.
14. Schwab, *La renaissance orientale*, pp. 173-4; but cf. Chapter 4 below.
15. Schwab, *La renaissance orientale*, p. 222, 20.
16. Arthur Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism* (New York, 1932), p. 182 and pp. 86 ff., 199-202, 248.
17. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda, by his Eastern and Western Disciples* (4th edition, Almora, Himalayas, 1949), p. 426.
18. Christopher Isherwood, *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* (London, 1965), p. 2.
19. Swami Nikhilananda, *Ramakrishna, Prophet of New India* (London, 1951), p. 221. Recorded on 26 September 1884.

20. For Sri Sarada Devi, see Nikhilananda, *Holy Mother* (London, 1963). Ramakrishna's attitude is evidence of Tantric beliefs, by which the sexual partners may reverence each other as god-principles. Ramakrishna is thus Brahman to Holy Mother's Sakti.

21. Guénon, *Hindu Doctrines*, pp. 326-7.

22. Quoted in *Life of Vivekananda*, pp. 317, 327.

23. *Life of Vivekananda*, pp. 311, 325, 433.

24. Wendell Thomas, *Hinduism Invades America* (New York, 1930), pp. 103-5.

25. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Illinois, 1965), pp. 5, 51, 52, 54. Shoghi is the great-grandson of Baha'u'llah.

26. E. G. Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion* (Cambridge, 1918), pp. 269-71.

27. Shoghi, *God Passes By*, pp. 55-6 and p. 204. Sarah Bernhardt was, of course, a great collector of exotica. She made a point of twice meeting Vivekananda, on one occasion telling him that the great dream of her life was to visit India, and that the Prince of Wales had promised to arrange everything. (*Life of Vivekananda*, pp. 706-7.)

28. Shoghi, *God Passes By*, pp. 163-4; Mirza Yahya took the name of Subh-i-Ezel, and was eventually exiled to Cyprus. Edward Granville Browne met him in Famagusta, and was unimpressed. See Browne (ed.) *A Traveller's Narrative, written to illustrate the episode of the Bab* (Cambridge, 1891), vol. II, pp. xxiv-xxvi. There are veiled imputations of hideous crimes made against Mirza Yahya by the followers of his half-brother; see e.g., Shoghi, *God Passes By*, p. 165.

29. *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah* (tr. Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette, Ill., 1949), p. 48.

30. Lady Bloomfield, *The Chosen Highway* (1940), pp. 149, 155, 219 ff. On interest shown by the British government in Abdul Baha, cf. Shoghi, *God Passes By*, p. 312. Abdul Baha in fact received a knighthood, which title he never used.

31. Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative*, vol. II, p. xvi.

32. Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion* (Cambridge, 1918), pp. 175 ff. 152-3; pp. 123-30 for reports of Khayrullah's lectures.

33. Browne, *Materials*, pp. 96-107; from Khayrullah's autobiographical account, transcribed by the Bahai historian, Mirza Jawah. See also p. 171.

34. Barrows, *Parliament of Religion*, vol. II, p. 1126.
35. G. de Chasseloup-Laubat (ed.), *Exposition Internationale de 1900 à Paris—Rapport generale sur les congrès de l'exposition* (Paris, 1906), p. 686. Contains a detailed comparison with the Chicago Exhibition.
36. Barrows, *Parliament of Religions*, vol. II.
37. Johnson, *World's Columbian Exposition*, vol. IV, p. 225.
38. Johnson, *World's Columbian Exposition*, vol. IV, pp. 227-9.
39. Barrows, *Parliament of Religions*, vol. II, p. 1558.
40. Johnson, *World's Columbian Exposition*, vol. IV, p. 311.
41. Chasseloup-Laubat, *Exposition Internationale*, p. 687.
42. Barrows, *Parliament of Religions*, vol. I, pp. 170-71, 168.
43. Johnson, *World's Columbian Exposition*, vol. IV, p. 336.
44. Barrows, *Parliament of Religions*, vol. I, p. 173.
45. Chasseloup-Laubat, *Exposition Internationale*, p. 686.
46. *Life of Vivekananda*, p. 698.
47. Chasseloup-Laubat, *Exposition Internationale*, p. 680.
48. Bishop B. W. Arnett of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Barrows, *Parliament of Religions*, vol. I, p. 180.
49. Dr. Simeon Gilbert in the *Review of the Churches* (New York, November 1893), quoted Johnson, *World's Columbian Exposition*, vol. IV, p. 333.
50. Richard Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution* (London, 1966), pp. 244-55.
51. Barrows, *Parliament of Religions*, vol. I, p. 243.
52. Bryan Wilson, *Religion in a Secular Society*, p. 44.

Chapter 3
The Masters and the Messiah

TO challenge Darwin in the lists appeared the most unlikely of antagonists. So much has been written about H. P. Blavatsky that it is unnecessary to more than sketch the outlines of her career. Theosophy (Divine knowledge), the creed which she founded, has had a remarkable influence on the least respectable zones of European mind; and our attention must be focused on what it became rather than its foundress. The flat, Mongoloid face with the hypnotic eyes which im-

pressed their power on everyone who noticed them—and everyone who met Madame Blavatsky did notice them—is an impressive if not beautiful mask for one of the most interesting evangelists of the age.

Helena Petrovana von Hahn was born in 1831 at Ekaterinoslav in the Ukraine. Her father, Captain von Hahn, was an officer of horse artillery, and her mother a popular novelist of considerable reputation. So far all are agreed. After this point the biographers, mostly with axes to grind, begin to differ ferociously.[1] The story told by her distant relative, Count Witte, is as acceptable as any. At the age of eighteen, the girl married the unfortunate Nikifor Blavatsky, Vice-Governor of the province of Erivan, whose short role in the life of his new bride consisted in giving his name to the former Helena von Hahn. Helena left Blavatsky soon after her marriage, returned to her grandfather's house, and was shipped off to join her father from the port of Poti. At the seaport, Madame Blavatsky "struck up an acquaintance" with the captain of an English steamer, and was whisked off to Constantinople, where she joined a circus as an equestrienne, before being picked up by the Hungarian opera-singer, Mitrovitch, and disappearing into limbo. She seems to have married Mitrovitch and subsequently an unknown Englishman. In Paris she appeared, so the story goes, as assistant to Daniel Dunglas Home; and her later activities included the directing of the Serbian Royal Choir. A return home was frustrated by her further acquaintanceship with Mitrovitch; and their stay in Kiev where Mitrovitch was singing in the Opera ended abruptly with Madame Blavatsky's publicly lampooning the Governor-General. To maintain herself and her aging companion the resourceful Helena established in quick succession an ink factory and wholesale business, and an artificial flower shop. These commercial undertakings were total failures, and Mitrovitch accepted an engagement to sing in Cairo. On the way to Africa the ship in which they were travelling sank, and Mitrovitch saved Helena at the expense of his own life. H.P.B.—as she was later to be known—was abandoned in Cairo, "in a wet skirt and

without a penny to her name."[2] After a career between the years 1871 and 1874 which is even more shadowy than her previous existence, Madame Blavatsky is discovered in America at the Vermont farm which was the home of the famous spirit mediums, the Eddys. Here she met a fellow-enthusiast for occult phenomena, a Colonel Olcott. His military rank proved, when examined, to be rather less impressive than his imposing beard; but he gave a new direction to her hitherto purposeless wanderings.

Whatever view we take of the biographical evidence, it is certain that H.P.B. had led an intriguing and perhaps scandalous life. There were rumors that at one time she had had a deformed child by Mitrovitch—but then again evidence has been discovered to show that the father of this child was an Estonian Baron Meyendorf, a keen Spiritualist, and a friend of Daniel Dunglas Home.[3] "Adventuress" would be too strong a word for the evidence to bear, but "experienced," particularly in the climate of the mid-century, seems timid and off the mark. She was, Bishop Leadbeater was to remark, "without exception the finest conversationalist that I have ever met,"[4] and it is certain that she had plenty to talk about.

To Colonel Olcott she talked a great deal. It soon became apparent that Madame Blavatsky had occult powers. This fascinated the Colonel, whose reason for being at the Eddy farmhouse was to write reports on the "phenomena" produced there. Her cousin records that in Russia Helena had exercised her powers as a spirit medium in defiance of her family;[5] and it is undoubtedly true that, despite her later concern to repudiate Spiritualism, in her early days in America she was a believer.[6] Together she and the Colonel investigated "phenomena" and struck up an alliance of two Seekers after Truth. The well-understood Spiritualist technique of the apport soon brought Colonel Olcott a letter from a mysterious personage signing himself "Tuitit Bey" of the "Brotherhood of Luxor," a body of which H. P. B. claimed intimate knowledge, if not membership.[7] The Colonel, an eager seeker after occult truth, fell eagerly upon this "precipitated" letter, became immersed in occult

study, and with Madame Blavatsky and the lawyer, William Quan Judge, founded the Theosophical Society on 13 September 1875.

The word "theosophy"—literally, God-knowledge—had been in use for several centuries before H.P.B. and the Colonel pounced upon it as describing their occult quest. Used generally, it signifies any mystical philosophy or practice which has as its object the knowledge of God. Used with a capital letter it means the brand of occultism manufactured by H.P.B. and her Society. As originally constituted, this rather antiquarian and literary body seemed harmless enough, though cranky—they sponsored the first cremation in America—but the formidable Helen Petrovna began to write a book.

It was a *big* book, over thirteen hundred pages long. Considering the appalling style, the magpie-like accumulation of mysticism, tall stories and archaeology, and the vicious anti-Christian bias, it is not surprising that such reviewers as struggled through *Isis Unveiled* were mostly denigratory, or at best puzzled. Equally unsurprising is the popularity which Madame Blavatsky's compendium of mystification afterward brought its author, who was offering her contemporaries the sort of spiritual porridge for which they craved. Spiritualism offered no theology to speak of and precious little glamor. In Madame Blavatsky's religion, it soon became apparent, the New Thought was very much the old.

> If modern masters are so much more in advance of the old ones, why do they not restore to us the lost arts of their post-diluvian forefathers? Why do they not give us the unfading colors of Luxor—the Tyrian purple; the bright vermilion and dazzling blue which decorate the walls of this place and are as bright as on the first day of their application? The indestructible cement of the pyramids and of ancient aqueducts; the Damascus blade, which can be turned like a corkscrew in its scabbard without breaking. . . ?

There was an ancient and secret wisdom which could only be communicated to the chosen few:

> . . . and many are those, who infected by the mortal epidemic of our century—hopeless materialism—will remain in doubt and mortal agony as to whether, when man dies, he will live again, although the question has been solved by long-gone generations of sages. The answers are these. They may be found on the time-worn granite pages of cave-temples, on sphynxes, propylons and obelisks . . . except the initiates no one has understood the mystic writing.[8]

It may be doubted whether any but the initiates knew what a propylon was.

The sources of *Isis Unveiled* have provided those who delight in textual analysis with a marvellous opportunity to burrow. The version given by Olcott of how the book was written is scarcely convincing.

> Her pen would be flying over the page, when she would suddenly stop, look into space with the vacant eye of the clairvoyant seer, shorten her vision as though to look at something held invisibly in the air before her, and begin copying on her paper what she saw. The quotation finished, her eyes would resume their natural expression. . . .[9]

H.P.B. (he wrote) was looking up her references "from the astral light." Through her clairvoyant vision she could see the books to which she wanted to refer without the tiresome necessity of visiting a library. Once, to check a quotation, she apported a couple volumes for Olcott. By these supernatural means she was able to compile the forbidding *Isis* with a reference library of just over a hundred titles.[10] Modern scholarship has formulated other theories. One interesting speculation is that inspired by the discovery of the correspondence between the doctrines of *Isis Unveiled* and the novels of the English politician and occultist Bulwer Lytton. In addition to direct plagiarism, Madame Blavatsky pays further tribute to Lytton, praising him in extravagant terms. It has even been argued that Lytton was the "master of my dreams" to whom she referred in a diary shown in an unguarded moment to a devoted friend.[11]

The idea of "Masters"—who are superhuman beings concerned with guiding humanity on the right path—was

to play a large part in the thought of the Theosophical Society. Madame Blavatsky was to claim that this crucial diary entry referred to her meeting, as a young girl in London for the Great Exhibition, with the occult Master who was to tell her to found the Theosophical Society. But there are so many implausibilities in her story, including the necessity of reading "Ramsgate" as "London," that the enquirer is automatically prevented from believing her. The speculation has been made that the dreamy young Helena Hahn, daughter of a novelist, herself passionately fond of the romances of Lytton and Fenimore Cooper, was overwhelmed in Ramsgate by the sight of her idol, the great Englishman. He was beyond her reach. In search of the reality behind her elusive fantasies she rushed off to Canada to look for Fenimore Cooper's Red Indians. This excursion certainly seems to have occurred, but resulted in disappointment, as the only Indians she found made off with her luggage.[12]

Whether or not the "master of my dreams" was Bulwer Lytton, an element of fantasy pervades the literary work of H.P. Blavatsky. Later on she was to embroider her adventures in India in a series of articles for a Russian newspaper; nothwithstanding her admission in the preface, these stories have been used as historical evidence by her more partial biographers. She wrote: "Broadly speaking, the facts and incidents are true, but I have fully availed myself of an author's privilege to group, color and dramatize them, whenever this seemed necessary to full artistic effect. . . ."[13] Such dramatic coloring is never absent from H.P.B.'s productions. It might be wondered if her indulgence in hashish—which she seems to have discovered when stranded in Cairo[14]—added further intoxication to an imagination already working more potently than most. H. P. B.'s Theosophy was a compounded of romantic nostaliga for a more "spiritual" and less taxing past, the determination to answer affirmatively for her audience the question of life after death, and the materials to hand for founding a religion. From Bulwer Lytton, or his sources, she drew a

garbled version of the occultist's traditions. From contemporary religious movements she extracted exotic Orientalism and Spiritualistic "phenomena." It was totally in character with the spirit of *Isis Unveiled* that the Theosophical Society should suddenly transfer the scene of its operations from New York to the East.

Through an Indian acquaintance, Colonel Olcott came to hear of Dayananda Saraswati and the *Arya Samaj*. This appeared to him to be a sort of Indian Theosophical Society; and he wrote to Dayananda suggesting an affiliation. Some form of association took place; but not content with this, H.P.B. and Olcott set sail for India. It was a nervous time for H. P. Blavatsky, for their ship was delayed from sailing. And there was the prospect that they might be prevented from leaving the country. Olcott's wife—who seems to have been completely abandoned—might at any minute have the ship stopped. Another member of the Society, traveling with them, had a law-suit pending. They eventually left America behind for good; and via London made their way to the East.

In India, the Theosophical Society established itself at Adyar, near Madras, took root and grew. From their early association with Dayananda and his revived Hinduism, the Founders of the Society turned to Buddhism. In 1880, Olcott and H.P.B. became Buddhists during their trip to Ceylon.[15] Among Indians the Society gained converts and retained considerable popularity as the first body of organized Western opinion to accept Eastern doctrines on their own merits. These, writes a modern historian, were encased in a pseudo-intellectual terminology which only increased the Theosophical appeal.[16] But the Society added to those elements of Eastern devotion which it accumulated doctrines peculiar to itself.

From fascination with the East, Madame Blavatsky proceeded to impose her own definitions on the Orient. Naturally, these were couched in terms which made a particular appeal to the Western spiritual malaise. We hear no more of the mysterious Brotherhood of Luxor, and a great

deal of the Hindu doctrines of *karma* and reincarnation. Theosophists, it appeared, were specially chosen to bear the light to the newly-evolving global society.° Those who had chosen it were known as "Masters"—men made perfect, living for the most part in Tibet, who had the direction of humanity as their task. This was achieved through a species of evolution—a spiritual evolution which paralleled the physical. The creed patched together by H.P.B. and extended in several directions by her successors is worth some examination as, like the Society itself, it was a compound of the most hopeful expectations of those who sought to fill the void opening before them.

First, H.P.B. made use of the practically "miraculous" appeal of Spiritualism. A notable early convert to Theosophy was A. P. Sinnett, the editor of the influential Anglo-Indian paper, *The Pioneer*, whose books—*Esoteric Buddhism* and *The Occult World*—introduced Theosophy to Europe for the first time. Madame Blavatsky, he wrote, produced "phenomena." At a picnic, she provided a missing teacup and saucer by selecting a spot on the ground and directing one of the participants to dig.

> The place chosen was the edge of a little slope covered with thick weeds and grass and shrubby undergrowth . . . cutting then into the matted roots and earth with the knife, and pulling away the debris with his hands, he came at last on the edge of something white, which turned out, as it was completely excavated, to be the required cup. A corresponding saucer was also found after a little more digging. Both objects were in among the roots which spread everywhere through the ground, so it seems as if the roots were growing round them.

At the close of this magical *fête champêtre* more tea was called for; but the party had run out of water. H.P.B. picked up an empty bottle, went a little way away—"and came back to us holding it under the fold of her dress. Laughingly producing it, it was found to be full of water. Just like a con-

° H.P.B. did not call it that; but his is what it amounts to.

juring trick, will someone say. Just like, except for the conditions."[17] Madame Blavatsky apported a brooch which had left the owner's possession some time before—an investigator from the Society for Psychical Research was unkind enough to suggest that it had then passed through Colonel Olcott's. Wherever H.P.B. went, the air reverberated to the sound of spirit rappings and "astral bells."

The Masters—whom later theorists were to define more thoroughly than H.P.B.—were, of course, responsible. Madame Blavatsky had felt the need of some more than ordinary supernatural justification for her proceedings, and she invoked the aid of two of these Adepts in particular. The Masters Morya and Kut Humi had taken the Society under their special protection. Madame Blavatsky had been initiated by them in Tibet, and was their *chela*, or pupil. These father-figures, who have their origins rather in the garbled traditions of later European occultism than in the East,[18] started to "precipitate" letters to Adyar; which supernatural method remained their means of communication.

Once, to satisfy the curiosity of their devotees, they precipitated into Adyar a picture of the valley in which they lived. It shows a steep ravine whose sides are covered in trees, from which project the roofs of temples, pagodas, and other buildings presumably Tibetan. On the left is a mounted man—the Master Morya. In the lake which occupies the center of the picture stands the Master Djwal Kul, who "shows us purposely His back, as He considered that His Mongolian features were not worth putting on record."[19] Beneath the valley (Theosophists were told) was a vast network of subterranean halls, containing an occult museum under the charge of Kut Humi, which held the models for every significant literary or architectural work of art which man produced. It was here, believers were given to understand, that the books were kept which H.P.B. read in the astral light. Here also lay the Book of Dyzan—sup-

posed to be the oldest manuscript in the world—from which H. P. B. took the account of the Creation to be found in her *Secret Doctrine*.[20]

Because the Masters were supposed to be physically present on the earth it was, however, theoretically possible to see them. Once, in the early days, a particularly devoted *chela,* S. Ramaswamier, set off after H.P.B. for the Himalayas. Madame Blavatsky succeeded in giving him the slip, but the dauntless *chela* was not defeated. "In despair, *I determined come what might,* to cross the frontier . . . and find the Mahatmas or—DIE."

Ramaswamier pressed on into Sikkim, carrying only an umbrella. On the road he met a leopard and a wild cat, but these did not deter him. On the second day's journey he achieved the object of his quest. He tells the story with all the verve of his mentors.

> It was, I think, between 8 and 9 a.m. I was following the road to the town of Sikkim, whence, I was assured by the people I met on the road, I could cross over to Tibet easily in my piligrim's garb, when suddenly I saw a solitary horseman galloping towards me from the opposite direction. From his tall stature and skill in horsemanship, I thought he was some military officer of the Sikkim Rajah. Now, I thought, I am caught! He will ask for my pass, and what business I have in the independent territory of Sikkim, and perhaps have me arrested and sent back, if not worse. But as he approached me, he reined up. I looked at and recognized him instantly . . . I was in the awful presence of him, of the same Mahatma, my own, revered *guru* whom I had seen before in his astral body on the balcony of the Theosophical headquarters . . . I knew not what to say: joy and reverence tied my tongue.[21]

A real live Mahatma—and phenomena as well! It is not surprising that a variety of interested reaction sprang from Europeans at this tale of the Himalayan Adepts and their Society. To the topical appeal of the Theosophical gospel was added the hostility of the Christian missionaries in India, and the inevitable concern of the Society for Psychical Research.

The story of the Theosophical Society must be shortened somehow, and it is kinder to pass quickly over uncomfortable facts. While Madame Blavatsky and the Colonel were gathering converts in Europe, a Madame Coulomb, who had been in some sort of partnership with H.P.B. when she had been stranded in Cairo and was now employed with her husband at Adyar, showed some damaging letters from H.P.B. to the editor of the *Madras Christian College Herald.* The latter, as a good missionary of the Scottish Free Kirk, rejoiced at the opportunity to strike out at the new religion which was leading his flock back into the dark places of paganism. In September and October 1884, two articles were published in which Madame Coulomb claimed that the vaunted "phenomena" were fraudulent, and that she and her husband had assisted in the deception. The Society for Psychical Research, which had already decided on the basis of an examination in London of A. P. Sinnett, Colonel Olcott, and others, that there was a *prima facie* case for further investigation of Theosophical "phenomena," sent out as their representative Richard Hodgson, a young protégé of Henry Sidgwick, possessed of a suitably sceptical cast of mind. He made short work of the Theosophical pretensions. The climax of his exposure came when Hodgson was being shown the Shrine—a wooden box in which messages from Tibet, apports of flowers, etc., were known mysteriously to appear. His guide, a devoted Theosophist, claimed that the Shrine was entirely solid. To prove his assertion, he struck the back of the construction with his hand—and released a secret trap-door.[22] Exposure followed exposure. Madame Blavatsky confessed, retracted, accused the Coulombs of plotting with the missionaries to destroy her. She had her moments of paranoia.

But the days of phenomena were over: Madame retired to Europe, marshalled her troops, and wrote another vast book, *The Secret Doctrine,* before her death in 1891. From the grave *The Secret Doctrine* taunted its readers with promises—or threats—of a further two volumes which would complete the work. The first two were only "the

work of a pioneer who had forced his way into the well-nigh impenetrable jungle of the Virgin forests of the land of the Occult."[23] The trail blazed by H.P.B. must be followed part of the way.

Together with her "phenomena," Madame Blavatsky combined a theology which had a particular appeal to a generation threatened by the theory of evolution. When the phenomena were exposed, it was the general approach and the theoretical basis of Theosophy which provided its chief justification. It was the genius of H.P.B. to apply Darwin's theory to produce a *hopeful* resolution of the human condition. Whereas others saw only the destruction of the sustaining myth of man's divine origins, H.P.B. discovered that evolution could apply also to the "spiritual" aspects of existence. Man had evolved from apes—perhaps; but he had a noble destiny. Just as *homo sapiens* had evolved from a lower form of animal life, and that form in its turn from a lower—a vegetable, protoplasmic, or unicellular existence—man as at present constituted was on his way to higher and better things. Evolution continued on a cosmic scale, with each individual born and reborn thousands of times until he had achieved earthly perfection. At the time of publication of *The Secret Doctrine*, for instance, "The *Ahats* of the 'fire-mist' of the seventh rung are but one remove from the Root-Base of their Hierarchy—the highest on Earth, and our Terrestrial chain."[24] This Hierarchy was, of course, the body of unseen Masters, who might voluntarily delay their progress to assist humanity. The rules of the game were determined by the doctrines of *karma* and reincarnation, which H.P.B. discovered in the East and transformed to suit her own purposes.

The idea of reincarnation needs no explanation; but the governing factor of *karma* as interpreted by H.P.B. and her successors should be clarified. In their simplistic version, *karma* is the sum of one's accumulated debts in past lives. If by evil actions one merits punishment, one's progress is delayed in the next existence. This can be accomplished either by suffering oneself or—paradoxically—by being

forced to commit actions which are really repugnant. If, on the other hand, one merits advancement, progress is assured. Thus C. W. Leadbeater and Annie Besant, who controlled the Society after the death of H.P.B., recorded in their "clairvoyant" investigations into the past lives of members of the Society how Annie Besant herself had first become human. The evolutionary leap was taken when Mrs. Besant was incarnated in a large, monkey-like body, in which form she was particularly attached to an entity already human, who was later to become the Buddha. One night the Buddha and his family were attacked by savages. During the ensuing fight, the Besant-monkey saved the Buddha at the cost of its own life. The aspirations of this relatively humble creature provoked a stream of cosmic reactions so that "in the very moment of dying the monkey individualizes, and thus he dies—a man."[25]

This romancing would probably not have been endorsed by H.P.B. whose thought, although far from clear, had a certain power which that of her successors lacked. But it does, however, show the implications of the theory of spiritual evolution that was outlined in *The Secret Doctrine*. H.P.B.'s occultism was an avowed attempt to reconcile Science and Religion. She maintained: "Occult Sciences claim less and give more, at all events, than either Darwinian Anthropology or Biblical Theology."[26] Neither was the theory of spiritual evolution her unique discovery. It has been made since Madame Blavatsky's time by Teilhard de Chardin and, in her own century, was expressed in different forms by both Bergson and Nietzsche.[27] As a solution determinedly optimistic, a valiant attempt to bend reason to the demands of faith, the creed of Theosophy was immediately attractive.

It was not for some time branded intellectually unrespectable, because the scientific disciplines it was traducing were young and their methods unfamiliar to the general public. Theosophical speculation about the nature of the world and man partook of many of the scholarly delusions of the day. One such was the racial theory of history. For

evolution took place, thought H.P.B., not only in personal terms and in terms of the whole species of man, but also in terms of the "race" to which the individual belonged. There had been four races on earth before the present race of mankind. The first had lived on an unnameable continent designated "The Imperishable Sacred Land." The second race inhabited a "Hyperborean" continent near the North Pole. The homes of the third and fourth races had been Atlantis and Lemuria; the fifth race had originated in America. Those unfortunates who belonged to the remains of previous races were now dying out:

> a phenomenon largely due to an extraordinary sterility setting in among the women, from the time that they were first approached by Europeans. A process of decimation is taking place all over the globe, among those races whose "time is up" —among just those races, be it remarked, which esoteric philosophy regards as the senile representatives of lost archaic nations.[28]

This doctrine of the occult destinies of races has continued to pervade Theosophical thought until comparatively recent times. It may well account for the influence which Theosophy has exercised on several nationalist movements.[29]

In the last analysis the achievement of H.P.B. was to make of what seems today a markedly eccentric society a part of the "progressive" thought of the late 19th century. Old standards were crumbling and, beyond a consciousness that a fresh start might have to be made, there was little unanimity among the intellectual, socially conscious, or politically active classes as to what the new order should be. The original objects of the Theosophists in New York were stated to be "to obtain knowledge of the nature and attributes of the Supreme Power, and of the higher spirits *by the aid of physical processes.*" We have already seen how in the writings of Andrew Jackson Davis the Spiritualist movement identified itself with similarly apocalyptic strivings for social reform. Such a self-identification took place among the Theosophists. Soon after the arrival in India of the two

Founders of the Society, their stated objects began to take on more of a "socially-conscious" coloring. By 1881 the first article to which Theosophists were pledged was not the pursuit of the Godhead, but the formation of "the nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity." This has ever since remained the first of the Society's advertised aims.

It is scarcely surprising if the dominating figure in the second phase of the Theosophical story came from the arena of social reform rather than the jungles of Hindustan. For on the death of H.P.B., the foundling Society was not left without a foster-parent. As a figurehead there remained Colonel Olcott, whose energies were mainly confined to the East. He had, moreover, two remarkable colleagues whose direction changed the whole tenor of the movement. Despite frequent reversals, Theosophical apologists were even more ingenious than the Spiritualists in finding ways out of their difficulties. Between the death of Madame Blavatsky in 1891 and 1935, some forty-five branches of the Society were established in different countries.[30] Under the leadership of Annie Besant, Theosophy became more powerful than ever before. Its history increases in significance because it represents so many of the confused aspirations of those who espoused the cause of the irrational.

The initial success of H. P. Blavatsky had created a climate of opinion in which miracles of a more ambitious sort than those of the Spiritualists could flourish. For many Europeans life took on a new dimension. The possibility of the supernatural had re-entered the commonplace. *Gurus* were feted in London as they beat the traditional path to Max Müller's door in Oxford. One hero of the moment, Sri Agamya Guru Pramahansa, had been an Indian High Court Judge before donning the robe of the *sannyasi*.[31] European capitals abounded with "mystics" of all conceivable and many almost inconceivable sorts. The Masters were seen throughout Europe. Franz Hartmann—a Theosophist who had been present at Adyar during the Society for Psychical

Research investigation, and possessed a Poe-like obsession with premature burial[32]—wrote in a series of articles in the London *Occult Review* of mysterious happenings among the cosmopolitan society of Europe, healings by the sign of the pentacle, traditional bewitchings of cattle, the teleportation of an Italian prince. . . .[33] A Mrs. J. D. reported a ghostly service in the chapel of a Florentine palazzo.[34] A certain Godfrey Anderson told of an unpleasant experience with a horse and brougham on the corner of Prince's Street and Hanover Street in Edinburgh:

> Suddenly, from the gutter, where it falls into the drain, rose a vague black shape about four feet long and two and a half feet high, without legs. It was shaped like an inverted hour-glass and moved like a huge caterpillar or the body of a galloping horse towards the horse about fifteen feet off. The movement was very rapid. It sprang to the throat of the animal, clung there like a limpet for an instant, and disappeared.[35]

Immediately, the horse reared up, and it required the efforts of Anderson and another passer-by to quiet it again. The coming of electric light had not made impossible a pleasant *frisson* of gothic terror: even in staid Edinburgh on 23 November 1905.

In this atmosphere Theosophy as recreated by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater attracted a substantial following. Mrs. Besant's extraordinary transformations from Anglican minister's wife through birth-control propagandist and labor leader to Theosophist and President of the Indian National Congress are too well known to need any elaboration. Arthur Nethercot, her biographer, suggests an element of the lesbian in the rapid domination of Mrs. Besant by H. P. Blavatsky.[36] But the well-known hypnotic effect of the Old Lady's presence does not seem to make such speculation necessary. Her mentor and partner in the running of the Theosophical Society was in any case Charles Leadbeater, a "clairvoyant" and romantic, who looked (as Arthur Nethercot has remarked) astonishingly like a former *guru* of Mrs. Besant, Bernard Shaw.[37]

Charles Webster Leadbeater belonged to that type of mildly homosexual clergyman who is as familiar now as he was then. He had been won over by Madame Blavatsky, but he always maintained that his first contact with Theosophy had been in the year 540 BC when he had visited Pythagoras on Samos. Since that period he had spent his time in Devachan—the heaven-world—because of his exclusive devotion to higher thought.[38] Leadbeater was an incurable romancer, and published a book called *The Perfume of Egypt and Other Weird Stories* which included a highly melodramatic account entitled "Saved by a Ghost" of an incident during his childhood in Brazil when apparently his father had been killed by rebels, yet discarnately had saved the child from a similar fate.[39] Ernest Wood, who was for years his private secretary, notes his fondness for H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, and Rider Haggard.[40] But Lady Emily Lutyens maintains that his favorite stories were *Dracula* and *The Beetle*.[41] Lady Emily's daughter, Mary, remembers C.W.L. reading Bulwer Lytton's *The Haunters and the Haunted* aloud to the young people he taught.[42] His imagination certainly ran on lines which would have been familiar to Madame Blavatsky.

His clairvoyance came from similarly imaginative sources. Wood tells us that his recommended method was to allow the imagination to play on "impressions" he received.[43] This technique was used by Leadbeater and Besant to expand the Theosophical theology of Madame Blavatsky in amazingly literal directions. For example, in their book *Thought Forms* they propound the theory that every human thought becomes clothed in an "elemental essence" which surrounds mankind and is for a short time a living form perceptible to clairvoyants.[44] These forms appear in a variety of colors, all of which are symbolic. "Pure religious feeling" is sky-blue. "Selfish religious feeling" is shot through with brown. "Jealousy" is brown with orange streaks, whereas "High Spirituality" is a pale violet. Aesthetically the most pleasing is perhaps "selfish

affection" which is a cloudy square of purplish-red, like a Victoria plum.[45] Colors and forms combine in a selection of patterns, of which the choicest specimen is the thought attributed to a Theosophist at a funeral, represented by a cone striped violet, blue and pink, up-ended in the center of a green pneumatic tire.[46] With such discoveries the two occultists regaled their Society.

Early in their partnership Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater had to fight battles. The first was, strictly speaking, Mrs. Besant's battle: and it lasted throughout the six years following the death of Madame Blavatsky. The *casus belli* was the vacant Secretaryship of the Society, for which both Annie Besant and W. Q. Judge contended that they had received the nomination of the Masters. This skirmish is typical of the countless quarrels which break out among occultists. For when there is no precisely defined channel of heavenly inspiration in such a movement, it is open to anyone who pleases to claim divine support. One can imagine poor Judge, sitting in America—he made only one visit to India—envying the other members their notoriety and supernatural luck. The Masters, however, found the Pacific Ocean the most minor of obstacles to the process of precipitation. The complex and interminable wrangle was thus lampooned:

> But first I would remark that there must needs be painful scenes
> When Theosophic gents begin to give each other beans
> And tho' Mahatma missives do pan out a little queer
> We should avoid disturbance in the Mahatmosphere.
>
> Now nothing could be nicer, nor more full of harmony
> Than the first few months that followed the decease of H.P.B.;
> Till Judge of Calaveras produced a curious set
> Of missives in red pencil what he said came from Tibet.
>
> From these he reconstructed a Mahatma (very rare)
> A nest of that peculiar kind pertaining to a mare

But Mrs. Besant found a rival message on the shelf
And said she fancied Mr. Judge had written his himself.

For in less time than I write it all the meeting got upset
With precipitating missives which did NOT come from Tibet,
And the things they called each other in their anger were a sin—
Till the public got disgusted and the temple roof caved in.[47]

By the end of 1895 Judge had led the majority of the American Lodges of the Society into secession from the main body, together with a proportion of the European Lodges. Mrs. Besant was left to dominate the European and Asian branches of the Society. In 1907, not without further controversy—involving the appearance of the Masters at the death-bed of Colonel Olcott—she at last succeeded to the position of titular as well as effective head of the main body of Theosophists.

By this time, she had become involved in a further battle. This concerned Leadbeater's proclivities. From his early days as a Hampshire curate until the close of his life in Sydney he seems to have had an incurable taste for young men.[48] That he kept his tastes to the end is shown by the picture painted by Emily and Mary Lutyens of the strange life led by the inmates of "The Manor," the educational establishment-cum-occult center maintained latterly by Leadbeater in Sydney. On their arrival in Australia Leadbeater met the Lutyens on the quay in a purple cassock, supported on the arm of his golden-haired favorite.[49] In the Manor itself, Leadbeater's acolyte slept in the principal's copper-lined room—the copper was very suitable for occult purposes.[50] How active a pederast Leadbeater was it is hard to say; but at the time of the original trouble in 1906, he certainly appeared culpable. Until recently it was commonly believed that Leadbeater had in fact merely been guilty of advocating masturbation to his pupils as a release from tension: a practice which would scarcely be condemned by many present-day psychologists or medical men. But the biographer of Annie Be-

sant has discovered an almost certainly damning note which was produced in evidence against Leadbeater. It was in a rudimentary cipher, which read in translation: "Glad sensation was so pleasant. Love and kisses darling." To be fair to Leadbeater, it should be said that the note was unsigned, undated, and written on unidentifiable paper—but then Leadbeater himself admitted to recognizing it.[51] The point would be of no importance, except insofar as it helps to describe the nature of an interesting man. But the charges of 1906 were to hang round Leadbeater's neck for several years, and were to be resurrected in a matter of more consequence. When asked to resign, Leadbeater meekly acquiesced. For two years he lived on the Continent in self-imposed exile, experimenting in "Occult Chemistry"[52]—a clairvoyant examination of the structure of matter carried out by the same methods that had produced *Thought Forms*. Two years elapsed before Annie Besant could maneuver him back into the fold.

Under the direction of Mrs. Besant and her friend, the character of the Society began slowly to change. At first this change was gradual, and consisted in an amplification of the teachings of Madame Blavatsky—but once more in a literary or romancing frame of mind, with the emphasis placed on the clairvoyant aspect of the information obtained. An aspirant after spiritual glory could apply to one of the Masters to be accepted as a pupil. In theory it was then a matter of his own efforts to rise through a series of "initiations," each initiation being the gateway to a higher, or more extensive state of consciousness. As the Masters were visited in the astral body while the physical body of the *chela* lay asleep, it in fact depended on a clairvoyant authority such as Leadbeater to intimate that progress had been made. This was perhaps as well; for there had been one notable tragedy as a result of excessive devotion to the Masters.

Just after the investigation carried out by Richard Hodgson into Madame Blavatsky's phenomena, Damodar K. Mavalankar left Adyar without telling any one, bound like Ramaswamier on a quest for the Mahatmas. It had in

fact been to Damodar that Ramaswaimer had addressed the account of his finally discovering his *guru* which has already been discussed. Damodar had been most disconcerted during the investigation by Hodgson's allegation that Madame Blavatsky had arranged to have Ramaswamier's Master impersonated by a Mr. Cassava Pillai, who was known to have been in the North at the time. The basis of this accusation was the fact that H.P.B. had chaffed Cassava Pillai on the loss of his beard. The crucial point was that he had no beard—but Ramaswamier's Master had.[53]

Damodar's faith obviously suffered a severe shock, and he was apparently determined to test the truth of Ramanswamier's experiences for himself. From Darjeeling he travelled north into Tibet, and a frozen body believed to be his was recovered some time later. As the Theosophists tell the story, Damodar did in fact reach the *ashram* (sanctuary) of his Master after severe testing, and the tale is made one of exemplary devotion.[54] Such a belief requires an act of faith as great as that in the reality of the Masters themselves.

The substitution of clairvoyant vision for normal perception, and astral travelling for physical locomotion, removed the possibility of further tragedies such as that of Damodar. But it resulted in the turning of the Theosophical Society from its most individual pathway toward a more conventional form of sectarianism. Hero-worship of the leaders, as clairvoyant channels of grace, usurped the position of exclusive devotion to the Masters. Annie Besant wrote:

> Often, with Saint Catherine of Siena, have I felt that intense love for someone even but a little higher than ourselves is one of the best methods of training ourselves in that lofty love of the Supreme Self which burns up all imperfections as with fire. Hero-worship may have its dangers, but they are less perilous, less obstructive of the spiritual life than the cold criticism of the self-righteous. . . .[55]

Mrs. Besant herself inspired devotion as spectacularly apparent as could be wished. Once, when she and Leadbeater were pursuing their investigations into occult chemistry in a

forest near Dresden, the Theosophist Esther Bright sat near the great A.B. with her fingers touching her dress, pouring forth feelings of love and submission. When the occult chemists adjourned for tea, Annie Besant described, greatly to Esther Bright's satisfaction, how a beautiful clear blue light had run along the hem of her dress and remained glowing around her.[56]

Such puerilities might seem not worth considering, were it not that they formed part of the ethos of the Society in its transitionary phase between the Theosophy of Madame Blavatsky and that of Mrs. Besant's Messiah. The devotion of such as Esther Bright—who seems to have been given to hero-worship, and in her early years had worshipped from afar the violinist Joachim under whom she had studied music[57]—was to be inspired in a far greater number of hearts by the advent of a symbol more easily accessible than the Tibetan Masters. Mrs. Besant found a Messiah, and Leadbeater became a Bishop. The Theosophical Society, which had started life as a philosophy of romantic syncretism, became the vehicle for a message of the Second Coming. On to a creed derived from every religion under the sun was grafted a traditional semi-Christian prophecy of the return of Christ.

The new Savior was called Jiddu Krishnamurti. Leadbeater had discovered him on the seashore near Adyar. Krishnamurti was the son of one of the staff at Theosophical Headquarters; and when Leadbeater had offered to take in hand the education of the boy and his brother, the suggestion had been welcomed. In the course of his clairvoyant investigations into the past lives of members of the Society, Leadbeater surveyed those of Krishnamurti, and was astonished by what he found. He wrote to Mrs. Besant that the boy was surely "not here by accident."[58]

From this time on Krishnamurti was brought up "at the feet of the Master"—to borrow the title of the book which was passed off as written by him.[59] Gradually it became common knowledge that Krishnamurti's body was to

become the vehicle of the "Lord Maitreya," the coming "World-Teacher" of the new age. For Theosophical teaching saw emerging a new "root-race," a new development of the evolutionary spiral, whose birth indicated another step forward for humanity. Accordingly the new race was to have a new Teacher, preaching the Theosophical message of love, brotherhood, and the unity of all religions. This Teacher was to be that Master who had inhabited the body of Jesus in ancient Palestine, and who would take possession of the body of Krishnamurti in the same fashion.

Annie Besant prophesied the Coming with enthusiasm: "Come in the might of Thy Love. Come in the splendor of Thy Power. And save the world which is perishing for lack of Thee; O Thou who are the Teacher of Angels and of Men."[60] This stands in sharp contrast to Mrs. Besant's earlier attitude, which had strongly criticized some overenthusiastic followers of Abdul Baha for claiming their leader as the Christ.[61] Precisely why Mrs. Besant felt the need to adopt the classical Millenarian buffer against disturbed times is difficult to determine. Nonetheless, in 1911, the year of the foundation of the Order of the Star in the East—the organization which supported Krishnamurti—she was drawing audiences of over four thousand for a single lecture at the Sorbonne.[62] It is better to suspend anything which smacks of a personal verdict, and to concentrate on the Theosophical Messianic cult as one of the symptoms of the flight from reason.

The new Order of the Star was launched amidst scenes of intense emotion. On 28 December 1911, Krishnamurti was ceremonially blessing the membership certificates of the Order, when a certain Star member flung himself on his face in front of the young man who might become the Messiah. There followed an outburst of tears and prostrations, which was brought to a climax by Krishnamurti's brother, Nityananda, who came from his position behind Krishnamurti to join the fervor of the other Star members. The relief from anxiety which Messianic

aspirations must bring scarcely needs to be described. The release of tension in the commitment of the Star members to Krishnamurti is sufficient indication.

Before the new Messiah could be introduced to the world, a development took place which nearly upset the whole movement. Krishnamurti's father, Narayaniah, demanded the return of his son, and he accused Leadbeater of being a corrupting influence. There seems little doubt that Narayaniah was put up to making the charge by Mrs. Besant's opponents, and that the fees of his counsel were paid by the newspaper, *The Hindu*. But there was also small doubt that Leadbeater had been up to his tricks again.[63] Prosecuting counsel, however, had a further string to his bow than the immoralities of the Theosophical clergyman. The boys' father, he maintained, had made a contract with Mrs. Besant so that his two sons should be educated at an English university. In the words of the very confused court reporter of the *Madras Times:* "It was one thing to give English education in an English university, and it was another to give such an education as to convert the body into a vehicle of Lord Maitreya." Learned counsel did not think this was healthy.[64] The case on both sides was a sordid one, with the prosecution harping on Leadbeater's homosexuality: he had been observed in suspicious circumstances with Krishnamurti. One the side of the defense, it was argued that Narayaniah had kept his children in a filthy condition, and that therefore—by implication—any existence was preferable to that they had previously enjoyed. Mrs. Besant herself cross-examined Krishnamurti's father, in an attempt to prove that he also had subscribed to the theories of his son's psychic powers. The situation is best epitomized by an extract from this dialogue:

> Mrs. Besant—"You have stated clearly that you never prostrated yourself before your son?"
> Narayaniah—"Certainly."
> Mrs. Besant—"If other persons swear that you did it, what would you say?"
> Narayaniah—"I don't care what they say. They are under your

influence and may say anything. I have never touched my son's feet with my hands or head."[65]

What with the evasive speech of Narayaniah and the partial justice of his accusations, the task of the judge must have been unenviable. The judgment he delivered was that of Solomon. The Messiah and his brother were made Wards of Court. But no further steps were taken against the Theosophical Society: an omission which cannot fail to have disappointed the instigators of the prosecution. However, on appeal to the Privy Council, the two boys were restored to the protecting arms of Mrs. Besant, and the cult of the World-Teacher could advance. Leadbeater himself became more and more withdrawn after his period of tutorship was over. He betook himself to Australia, where he was quite happy extending his doctrine of thought-forms to include the monumental constructions generated at church services. Visions of the blancmange-textured mosques created by the vibrations of the Holy Eucharist were sufficiently complex to occupy the foreground of his thoughts.[66] In 1916 he accepted a Bishopric in the Liberal Catholic Church. Although this was originally done to further the coming of the Lord Maitreya, it seems gradually to have become more important to him than the cause of Krishnamurti.

That cause prospered and grew. Badges, Orders, and newspapers helped to propagate the faith. Krishnamurti travelled the world speaking at camps in India, in California, and at Ommen in Holland, where the Order of the Star in the East had been presented with a castle by a noble supporter. Within the Society troubles arose, and led to the secession of large numbers of the German Section under the leadership of the imposing Dr. Rudolph Steiner.[67] From the Antipodes, Leadbeater took a doubtful view of Annie Besant's enthusiastic championship of her cause. "I hope she will not wreck the Society," he confided to Ernest Wood.[68]

Eventually, on 28 December 1925, the World-Teacher came. Krishnamurti was speaking to a gathering of the

faithful, reminding them how they were all expecting the arrival of the Great Teacher. He would come to those who had so long desired Him. Suddenly he gave a start, halted, and resumed his speech in a different voice, using the first person singular: "I come to those who want sympathy, who want happiness, who are longing to be released . . ."[69] The Messiah had arrived.

He was a doubting Messiah at best. The Order of the Star in the East lasted until 1929, when it was dissolved by Krishnamurti himself, who renounced all claims to be other than himself, and repudiated all religious sects and organizations. Truth, he maintained, was "a pathless land." Help in leading one's life came only from within. The whole structure which had been built up for him, the pretensions foisted upon him came to nothing.[70] From that date until the present day Krishnamurti has taught his personal philosophy; and while critics may disagree as to its meaning or its value, it is certainly unlike any creed professed by the Theosophical Society. By 1932 the Theosophical Society had shrunk to 33,000 members. The next year Mrs. Besant died, and at about this time Krishnamurti lost all memory of events before 1929.[71] As forces to move men, the Masters and the Messiah were buried together.

The Theosophical Society is significant for many reasons. As a prototype occult society it presents an example of unfamiliar patterns of thought. In its origins and development are obvious several facets of the flight from Reason. Of itself it was in its heyday extraordinarily extensive, with branches throughout Europe, America, Asia, and Australasia. The mode of thought which can properly be called Theosophical has had remarkable repercussions—for it is the epitome of the pseudo-intellectual. Without further overstepping the chronological limits of this volume, it can be said that Heinrich Himmler, for example, was thoroughly imbued with Theosophic tenets, and that these naturally made a substantial difference to his patterns of thought.[72] In terms of the history of occultism and the 19th-

century revival in particular, Theosophy was the disseminator and distorter of countless non-rational theories of the universe—for as it combined Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and diverse manufactured notions into one eccentric whole, none of these doctrines was ever binding on a single member, who might feel free to make his personal synthesis as he chose.

What sort of person joined the Theosophists? Those generally concerned by the crisis of consciousness: hosts of women, those on whose hands time hung heavy, and to whom every tick of their drawing-room clock spelled boredom and imprisonment. It is significant that the movement for Women's Suffrage and the Theosophical Movement ran in England simultaneous courses.

Lady Emily Lutyens, the wife of the architect, is interesting in this context. Before joining the Theosophical Society she had interested herself in state-regulated prostitution, and toyed with the notion of Women's Suffrage. Her sister, Constance, went the whole way, was jailed and forcibly fed. Converted by Mrs. Besant, Emily became for ten years the devoted "foster-mother" and adherent of Krishnamurti.[73] The point is not that Emily Lutyens' was a typical life—her family was scandalized when Constance began to write for the papers—but that even among the highest reaches of society the crisis of consciousness made itself felt. The supernatural was no stranger to the family of Emily Lutyens. She herself had been born Emily Lytton, the granddaughter of the occultist Bulwer Lytton, and was the sister-in-law of Gerald Balfour, who with his brother Arthur became President of the Society for Psychical Research. The Balfours' sister, Nora, married Henry Sidgwick, whose own sister, Mary, became the wife of Edward White Benson, and the mother of Robert Hugh. Within this family connection, it is quite natural to find at least one devoted Theosophist.

But there was nothing aristocratic about Theosophy. Particularly in its later phases as a millenarian movement, it attracted the same sort of recruit which such movements have

always attracted. Norman Cohn tells us that in the Middle Ages the prophets of the Millennium came mainly "from the lower strata of the intelligentsia. They included many members of the lower clergy, priests who had lost their parishes, monks who had fled from their monasteries, clerks in minor orders . . ."[74] Of those immediately surrounding Krishnamurti, Leadbeater, and his fellow-Bishop and superior in the Liberal Catholic Church, James Wedgwood, were frustrated clergymen. George Arundale, tutor after Leadbeater to Krishnamurti, and subsequently President of the Society, was an ex-schoolmaster. Even such peripheral figures as Baillie Weaver, a retired lawyer who made a half-hearted bid for the favor of the new Messiah, fit the pattern well.[75]

From the Masters to the Messiah was a considerable journey. Madame Blavatsky's Theosophy was after all to prove the more lasting. Her intimations of occult secrets might have had even more effect if she had not become concerned with Masters and "phenomena." Mrs. Besant, on the other hand, abandoned the most original part of the Theosophic credo in favor of the Millennium proclaimed by her World-Teacher. In this she merely followed an example which by the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was well-established.

1. The most recent life of Madame Blavatsky is that of John Symonds (London, 1959). It resumés most of the evidence.
2. *The Memoirs of Count Witte* (tr. and ed. A. Yarmolisky, London, 1921), pp. 4-9.
3. Symonds, *Mme. Blavatsky*, p. 228.
4. C. W. Leadbeater, *How Theosophy Came to Me* (Adyar, 1930), p. 51.
5. *Memoirs of Count Witte*, p. 7.
6. See E. R. Corson (ed.), H. P. B., *Some Unpublished Letters* (London, 1929).
7. Symonds, *Mme. Blavatsky*, p. 66.
8. H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* (New York, 1877), vol. I, pp. 239, 573.

9. Henry Steele Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves* (New York and London, 1895), vol. I, pp. 208-9. Subsequent volumes published in Adyar, 1935.

10. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, vol. I, p. 207. The official history of the Theosophical Society shows that a certain Charles Sotheran was very helpful to H.P.B. in "finding quotations and borrowing books for her during the writing of *Isis Unveiled*." See Josephine Ransom, *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* (Adyar, 1938), p. 114.

11. S. B. Liljegren, *Bulwer-Lytton's novels and Isis Unveiled* (Uppsala, 1957).

12. Liljegren, "Quelques romans anglais, source partielle d'une religion moderne," in *Mélanges offerts à Fernand Baldensperger* (Paris, 1930), vol. I, pp. 76-7.

13. H. P. Blavatsky, *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan* (London, 1892), p. iii.

14. Symonds, *Mme. Blavatsky*, p. 35. It seems that H.P.B. first smoked hashish in Cairo, and later—under medical supervision—in New York.

15. Ransom, *Theosophical Society*, pp. 115 ff., 109, 143.

16. Michael Edwards, *British India* (London, 1967), p. 275.

17. A. P. Sinnett, *The Occult World* (London, 1881), pp. 67, 73-4.

18. See Chapter 6 et seq.

19. Leadbeater, *The Masters and the Path* (Adyar, 1925). Caption to frontispiece.

20. Leadbeater, *Masters and the Path*, pp. 216-18.

21. S. Ramaswamier to Domodar K. Mavalankar, "How a *chela* found his guru," reprinted from *The Theosophist* in *Five Years of Theosophy* (London, 1885), pp. 446, 450-51.

22. See Symonds, *Mme. Blavatsky*, p. 224; cf. Ransom, *Theosophical Society*, pp. 209 ff. Hodgson's *Report* is to be found in *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, vol. III, part IX, 1885, pp. 201 ff.

23. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (1st edn., London, 1888). I in fact used the Point Loma edition (1909), which has the same pagination as the original. The enquirer who intends to make a study of the *Secret Doctrine* would be well advised to equip himself with the Concordance (Adyar, 1940), which may make some preliminary sense of the intractable bulk of the book.

24. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, p. 207.

25. Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, *Man, Whence, How and Whither* (London, 1913), pp. 34-6.

26. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. II, p. 9.

27. Henri Bergson's *L'Evolution creátrice* appeared in 1907. Six years later the philosopher became President of the Society for Psychical Research. His sister married MacGregor Mathers of the Golden Dawn—see Chapter 7 below, and notes. Nietzsche is perennially claimed as an occult hero. For this claim from a purely Theosophical viewpoint, see Annie Besant, "On the Watchtower," in *Theosophical Review*, XXVII, no. 158 (15 October 1900), where she declares that by virtue of his hope for the advent of the Superman, Nietzsche "belongs distinctly to us." But because of his lack of development, he falls victim to "the lower brute energy" and dreams of Frederick the Great as the embodiment of this Superman. As for Teilhard, he applies the concept to orthodoxy. (For this 'self-strengthening' attitude, see Chapter 4 below and cf. attitude of Eliphas Lévi to the Cabala in Chapter 7 below.)

28. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. II, pp. 779-80.

29. For Annie Besant's role in the Indian National Congress, see Arthur Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant* (London, 1963); for the Irish Nationalists and Theosophy, see Chapter 8 below; cf. also George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (London, 1966), for what he calls Theosophy, which sometimes is, sometimes is not, Theosophy with a capital letter. For the possible influence of such thought in proto-Nazi movements and Nazism itself, see my forthcoming *The Occult Establishment*.

It is interesting that the Comte de Gobineau, who has been noted as one of the first observers of the Bahai Faith, has achieved notoriety as the author of *Sur l'inegalité des races humaines* and the father of racist ideology. This is to make particular the parentage of an idea whose conception was much more general, and in fact widely diffused throughout early historical scholarship. But the coincidence of interest in non-European ideas and the racial theory occurs also in the Theosophical Society.

30. Ransom, *Theosophical Society*, pp. 81, 155, 554.

31. See *The Occult Review* for January 1907, pp. 10 ff.

32. *The Occult Review* (November 1906).

33. *The Occult Review* (1906-7).
34. *The Occult Review* (June 1906), p. 315.
35. *The Occult Review*, pp. 315 ff.
36. See Arthur H. Nethercot, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant* (London, 1960), pp. 321-3. This together with the *Last Four Lives*, already cited, is the really authoritative source for both Besant and the later Theosophical movement. It is difficult to conceive of its being replaced.
37. Nethercot, *First Five Lives*, p. 341.
38. Leadbeater, *How Theosophy Came to Me*, pp. 1-4.
39. Nethercot, *First Five Lives*, p. 339.
40. Ernest Wood, *Is This Theosophy?* (London, 1936), p. 146.
41. Emily Lutyens, *Candles in the Sun* (London, 1957), p. 26.
42. Mary Lutyens, *To Be Young* (London, 1959), p. 165.
43. Wood, *Is This Theosophy?*, p. 141.
44. Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, *Thought-Forms* (London and Benares, 1905), p. 25.
45. Besant and Leadbeater, *Thought-Forms*, frontispiece.
46. Besant and Leadbeater, *Thought-Forms*, p. 60.
47. From Edmund Garrett, *Isis very much unveiled* (London, n.d.).
48. For early life, see Nethercot, *First Five Lives*, pp. 391 ff.
49. Emily Lutyens, *Candles in the Sun*, p. 116.
50. Mary Lutyens, *To Be Young*, p. 167.
51. Nethercot, *Last Four Lives*, pp. 96-7.
52. Ransom, *Theosophical Society*, p. 361.
53. Hodgson, *Report*, pp. 363-4.
54. See Symonds, *Mme. Blavatsky*, p. 217.
55. Annie Besant, "Discipleship," in *Theosophical Review*, XXXVIII, no. 227 (July, 1906), p. 398.
56. Esther Bright, *Old Memories and Letters of Annie Besant* (London, 1936), p. 110.
57 See Bright, *The Ancient One* (London, 1927).
58. Ransom, *Theosophical Society*, p. 383.
59. Alcyone, *At the Feet of the Master* (London, 1927; first publication, 1910). For some particularly fine specimens of Leadbeater's skill as a romancer, see Besant and Leadbeater, *Man, Whence, How and Whither* (London, 1913), p. 127, in which an orgy in some probably South American temple is

described. This includes the presumed ravishment by "Alcyone" (Krishnamurti) of another member of the Society going under the name of "Cygnus." At the close of the orgy, werewolves arise from the stupified bodies of the celebrants, to return with their jaws dripping blood.

60. "Invocation to the Master of the Great White Lodge" in Annie Besant, *The Coming of the World-Teacher* (London, 1925), p. 23. This invocation was generally used in Krishnamurti's Order of the Star in the East.

61. See "On the Watch-tower" in *Theosophical Review*, vol. XXVII, no. 160 (15 December 1900). "It scarcely seems credible that these otherwise intelligent people should have subscribed to the extreme form of faith above described." Abdul Baha, on the other hand, welcomed the Theosophical Society as allies. See his address to the T. S. in Budapest (12 April 1913), printed by David Hofman (ed.), *Selections from Bahai Scripture* (London, 1941), pp. 299 ff.

62. Ransom, *Theosophical Society*, p. 392. For traditional 19th-century Millenarianism, see next chapter.

63. Nethercot, *Last Four Lives*, pp. 170-71, 187 and 193.

64. This unreported case is to be found in the *Madras Times* (21 March—16 April 1913). The difficulty experienced by the reporter in the transcription of European names is a handicap to understanding him; for example, the case of "Olcott v. Skinner" frequently referred to does not exist—it is *Allcard* v. *Skinner*, printed 36 Chancery Division 145. At the same time as the main case was being heard, the T.S. was involved in two other lawsuits: *Besant* v. *Rama Rao and T. M. Nair*; and *Schwarz* v. *The Hindu*. Reports of both cases ran in the April and May *Madras Times*. Rama Rao was the publisher, and Dr. Nair the editor of *The Antiseptic*, in which he (February 1911) had published an article entitled "Psychopathia Sexualis in a Mahatma," calling Leadbeater the "high priest of Onanism."

65. *Madras Times*, 29 March 1913.

66. See C. W. Leadbeater, *The Science of the Sacraments* (London, 1920). See Emily and Mary Lutyens, op. cit., for accounts of life at his colony in Sydney.

67. For Steiner, see my remarks and references in my *The Occult Establishment* (forthcoming).

68. Wood, *Is this Theosophy?*, p. 294.

69. Quoted Annie Besant, *How a World-Teacher Comes* (London, 1926), pp. 22-3.

70. Kirshnamurti's own reasons for dissolving the Order of the Star are printed in Lilly Heber, *Krishnamurti, the Man and his Message* (London, 1931).

71. Nethercot, *Last Four Lives*, pp. 449 ff.

72. On Nazism and the occult see *The Occult Establishment*.

73. See Emily Lutyens, *Candles in the Sun*.

74. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (paperback edition, revised, London, 1970), p. 85.

75. For Weaver, see Emily Lutyens, *Candles in the Sun*, pp. 76-7.

Chapter 4
The Lord's Anointed

THERE was almost an *embarras de Messies* in the 19th century. Both old and new worlds were peopled with prophets of varying descriptions. For within the very ranks of the Christian tradition the crisis of consciousness had made itself profoundly felt. It was no more than natural that the anxieties of a proportion of mankind would find expression in the language of their religious inheritance. It was natural, too, for existing branches of the Christian church to meet the challenge of advancing rationalism in traditional fashion.

The manner of this reaction was predictable, because the situation had occurred before. Historical comparisons are always dangerous, but with the obvious proviso that history never quite repeats itself, it is possible to say that the situation in 1850 bore a remarkable resemblance to that of 300 years earlier. It is almost as dangerous to make statements about the Renaissance and the Reformation as it is to make historical comparisons, but it is part of the thesis of this book that the 19th-century crisis was similar to, or more correctly, a belated continuation of the intellectual and spiritual upheavals of the 15th and 16th centuries.

From one point of view, what had occurred during the Renaissance/Reformation was roughly this: what might be called the Establishment culture of Western Europe, based entirely upon Christian values as defined by Rome, had at last yielded up its monopoly of jurisdiction—never in theory, of course, but certainly in practice. There had been earlier attempts to shatter this cultural dictatorship. Sporadically heretics had attempted to establish their right to believe as they please; and from within the Church itself had come challenges to Papal supremacy. In the 12th century A.D. the West had again come into contact with alien modes of thinking, but until then European thought had for centuries been sealed within a tightly-stoppered bottle of prescribed speculation. The Renaissance represents the cultural release from the papal strait-jacket; the Reformation, the same release expressed in religious terms. That some of the rebellious prophets ended by establishing tyrannies more grotesque than any from which they had escaped, merely requires some commonplace about human nature.

In response to repeated proclamations that every man was his own priest, and that worldly values could indeed be separated from spiritual ones, the Church had been forced to reassert its traditional position. This was done by accentuating the spiritual element of religion, building ever more gorgeous churches, encouraging (sometimes with a whiff of paganism) the adoration of the Virgin, multiplying gilt,

marble, and jewels.[1] At the same time, the policy of the Counter-Reformation re-emphasized dogma, placed heavy accents on obedience, proclaimed from the roof-tops that the Pope was Christ's vicar upon earth, and that only through him could salvation be attained.

The policy had not been successful in recovering territory lost, but in the circumstances was probably the best that could have been devised. Its initial hold on Europe slackened during the next 300 years, until in the middle of the 19th century the now disparate churches had to face a threat to their very existence—something that had earlier never been in question. For during the 17th and 18th centuries the churches had been forced to reach some *modus vivendi* with the new secularist elements in society. And this uneasy marriage had been encouraged by the monarchs of the day, who had found that in traditional notions of powers transmitted by God to his deputies in church and state there lay a most attractive defense of personal and authoritarian government to be used against the ever-increasing clamor of populist thought.

This over-simplified sketch is drawn to demonstrate that, although the medieval corked bottle could never be re-sealed, a cynical union of the Powers that Were had contrived in effect to reconstitute an "Establishment" pattern of thought, an orthodoxy convenient to maintain their mutually precarious situations. It was in this climate of thought that the English church could affect to despise "enthusiasm," and religion continued to be used well into the 19th century as an overt means of maintaining the social status quo. When both social protest and intellectual doubt threatened this compromise Establishment, the challenge was met within the Christian frame of reference, by *exactly the same mechanisms which had been adopted 300 years before.*

To take first what might be called the "Protestant mentality" and its automatic reaction. This is a tendency to fragment, to create ever more sects, as ever more points of view raise their seductive heads. Thus in the Re-

naissance/Reformation crisis, Lutherans had bred Calvinists; Anabaptists had attempted to establish the Kingdom of God on earth; in England the Fifth Monarchy Men awaited the Second Coming. In the 19th century, the sects multiplied as before, their particular beliefs naturally conditioned by the intellectual or emotional requirements of the time, and the revelations of each new prophet. There were two broad paths along which new sects could travel—the road to some sort of new compromise with scientific rationalism; or the track which wound back in time toward a fresh assertion of the fundamental truths of the Christian faith. What these were, of course, was always matter for dispute.

The chief storehouse of the Protestant mind lay in America, where the inherited traditions of immigrant schismatics combined with the necessities of a frontier nation to create exactly those conditions in which new revelations, bearing a superficial relation to the old, could flourish. As elsewhere, the Age of Reason had resulted in a decline in established religion: the clergy deplored the loss of faith. In 1798 the Presbyterian General Assembly talked in a pastoral letter of a "general defection from God," but by the next year they saw signs of a revival, and by 1800 they were sure.[2] The initial religious revival with its attendant phenomena of convulsions, trances, visions, and men barking like dogs, had by 1803 nearly covered the territory of the Union.[3] In that year declining interest set in, and by 1805 the movement was quiescent. But during the whole of the 19th century there were sporadic outbreaks of revivalist feeling, and a series of cults sprang up which proved more than transitory. Particularly was this so in the "burned-over district," the area most heavily worked by the revivalist preachers where, as has been said, Spiritualism was born.

In the late 1830s and early 1840s Christ's Coming was confidently expected among large sections of the population. These hopes of the Millennium seem to have been inspired by the economic panic of 1837 which caused widespread distress in the rural areas.[4] The leading prophet

of the Second Coming was William Miller, a farmer in New York State with an interest in Scriptural interpretation. In 1831 he was unexpectedly called on, in the absence of the local Baptist preacher, to preach a sermon on the second advent. Coincidentally, Miller had just taken a private vow to serve God if He cared to call him. After a hard struggle with his inclinations to run away and hide, he agreed to preach the sermon, was an instant success, and found himself without intending it at the head of a religious revival.[5]

Once committed, Miller threw himself wholeheartedly into his new role. His detailed knowledge of Biblical prophecy was brought into play, and by 1834 he was not only lecturing constantly on the Second Advent, but proclaimed that it was imminent, and announced the year of the Coming to be 1843. Immense interest was shown in Miller's prediction. His followers pointed to a brilliant comet seen in the sky and to other strange portents. The Millerite community in Boston hurriedly erected a Tabernacle with a one-year fire insurance policy.[6] The period in which the Millennium would take place was stretched to include the first three months of 1844 but by the end of March Miller admitted his error and reformulated his calculations to a precise date: 22 October 1844.

The disappointment experienced by the Millerites was unimaginable. "Still in the cold world!" wrote one Millerite lecturer. "No deliverance—the Lord not come!" A short time after the date fixed for the Coming, one Adventist wrote that on being told to prepare for another cold winter he "left the place of meeting and wept like a child."[8] Another wrote that his "advent experience" had been the "richest and brightest" of all his Christian experience, and asked "if this had proved a failure, what was the rest of my Christian experience worth? Has the Bible proved a Failure? Is there no God, no heaven, no golden home city, no paradise?"[9] With the failure of their hopes of heaven, the Adventists had to return to face the crisis of their century. Some met the situation by an even more mystical interpretation of Scripture, and the largest body of these—the

"Seventh Day Adventists"—claimed for the United States and Canada a membership of over 200,000 in 1943. The original Millerites had never claimed more than 50 to 100,000.[10]

There were other Adventist groups owing allegiance to other leaders. Of these the Jehovah's Witnesses are probably the best known. This sect originated in the Bible Societies of Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916), a wealthy and acute chain-store draper. Russell's inspiration was drawn almost entirely from Adventist thought. In 1870 his wavering faith was revived by a chance encounter with a group of Second Adventists; and his first predictions of Christ's Coming in the year 1878 were framed in conjunction with R. H. Barbour, an Adventist who believed that Christ had come insensibly in 1874.[11] Barbour's faith did not survive the disappointment. But Russell developed yet another Scriptural interpretation, and despite friction with other millenarian groups succeeded in the short period 1879-80 in building up thirty congregations in seven states.[12] That this success was achieved virtually single-handed says much for the tenacity of Adventist hopes in America.

It was not until the 1880s that Russell began again, using the usual millenarian methods of interpreting the prophetic books of the Old Testament,[13] to formulate the year of Christ's Coming. This time he chose 1914. He prepared for the Millennium by making an eight-hour-long entertainment called "The Photo Drama of Creation" comprising color film, stereoscopic slides and a synchronized soundtrack on gramophone records, which was shown on the eve of the New Dispensation to illustrate the true story of the world as told in the Bible.[14] Two years after the failure of this prophecy, Russell died; and it is in a schismatic and splintered form that the Jehovah's Witnesses survive today.

Norman Cohn has shown how millenarianism draws its support from those who have no recognized place in society; the rootless, the unsuccessful, the disoriented.[15] It might be thought that American hopes of the Second Coming

constituted a purely American phenomenon, were these hopes not linked closely to other hopes of a new dispensation, political, moral, intellectual, which were in the air at the same time. 1879 was a very late date at which to start prophesying the Millennium in fundamentalist terms unless there was some most compelling reason. Russell was able to expand his movement overseas: in 1900 he opened an office in London; in 1903 in Germany, and the following year in Australia. The expectations of the Second Adventists merely expressed in a traditional form the anxieties felt throughout the Western world.

It was in a similar situation of insecurity that Mormonism arose. Joseph Smith, the founder, was born in Palmyra, in the very center of the "burned-over" district.[16] One of the main preoccupations in that area of mortgaged farms and wandering mesmerists was treasure-hunting. The favorite sites for finding the cache of gold that would save a property were Indian burial mounds. In Palmyra a dowser named Walters, who used stuffed toads and crystals to "scry" in —the principle is that of the fortune-teller's "crystal ball"—as well as his dowsing-rods, made a great stir by claiming to have found an Indian record telling where treasure was buried. When Walters left the town, the local paper noted that his mantle had fallen upon Joseph Smith. The latter appears to have tried to emulate Walters by using "magical rites" involving ritual swords and a sacrificed black sheep. But Smith's career as a treasure-hunter seems to have begun in earnest with the discovery of his own "seer-stone," a blackish stone he claimed to have found twenty feet underground. At the same time he was affected to some extent by the religious revival, and is supposed to have had a vision.[17]

Smith's seer-stone first caused him trouble in 1826 when he was found guilty of being a "disorderly person and an imposter."[18] The following year the story was first heard that Smith had discovered a set of gold plates which had been revealed to him by a spirit.[19] Joseph Smith did not write his official version till 1838. The details of the story

are unimportant; but orthodoxy has it that he had for four years been visited by an angel who revealed the burial-place of the golden plates to him, but would not allow him to take them till 1827. He also discovered the two miraculous stones, Urim and Thummim, which he used as scrying-stones to decipher the inscriptions on the plates. The results were published in New York in 1830 as the *Book of Mormon*. In the same year the Church of Christ, later to be the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, was founded with six members.

The *Book of Mormon*'s first edition was signed, rather unfortunately, by "Joseph Smith, Author and Proprietor."[20] But in its later editions this was excised. The official description of the *Book* follows:

> The period covered by the *Book of Mormon* annals extends from B.C. 600 to A.D. 421. In or about the latter year, Moroni, the last of the Nephite historians, sealed the sacred record, and hid it up unto the Lord, to be brought forth in the latter days, as predicted by the voice of God through his ancient prophets. In A.D. 1827, this same Moroni, then a resurrected personage, delivered the engraved plates to Joseph Smith.[21]

The story told is of the family of Nephi, who had left Jerusalem in 600 BC and sailed to America, where for certain misdeeds the Lord cursed two of the group with red skins. Fawn Brodie has discovered remarkable correspondences between the *Book of Mormon* and a book called *A New View of the Hebrews, or the Ten Tribes of Israel in America*, published in 1823 by Ethan Smith, a Vermont pastor, which was a compendium of various romantic theories about the builders of the burial mounds.[22] Joseph Smith improved on this theory, which his namesake Ethan was by no means the only one to hold;[23] and he introduced a ministry of Jesus Christ to the people of Nephi in America in which Christ was made to choose twelve Nephite disciples.[24] Joseph Smith was unfortunate in his own first converts. Of the three "witnesses" who swore that they had seen the inscriptions on the golden plates, all apostatized, although two were later received back into the Church.[25]

This early defection did not materially affect the rapid growth of the new religion.

It is important to realize that what was to become a large and important body of organized opinion took root in the same atmosphere of superstition as nurtured Andrew Jackson Davis, and that Mormonism is not so unique a creature as might appear. Periodically, too, the cult has undergone millenarian phases.[26] Smith was not content merely to wait for the Second Coming: he actively organized communities to bring heaven on earth according to his plans. In 1831 the first colonies were started in Missouri and Kirtland, Ohio; whence began the long saga of flight and settlement which did not end until the Mormons reached Salt Lake in Utah.[27] The ultimate triumph of Mormonism was that the church became "a perfected expression of the needs of a pioneering co-operative community, a mighty instrument for farming the desert."[28] But it shared many elements of its appeal with other revelations.

Christian Science arose in something of the same milieu; although whereas the Adventist cults were fundamentalist in tone, the movement associated with the name of Mary Baker Eddy represents something of an attempt to compromise with the new currents of thought. Despite the fact that Christian Science claims to recover the lost emphasis of primitive Christianity,[29] the compromise was not with rationalist science, but with mesmerism. The attribute of "Science" with which the cult invested itself had, indeed, much in common with the titles of "Professor" or "Doctor" used so freely by travelling mesmerists.

It was from a Frenchman, Charles Poyan, that Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802-66) first heard of Mesmerism at a lecture in Belfast, Maine. Quimby was the son of a blacksmith, with little formal education but an aptitude for mechanics. His imagination was caught by the mesmeric theories, and he started his own experiment. He found a subject, a young man called Lucius Burkmar, who in trance could diagnose illness. During the years 1838-42 they travelled about together and "gave exhibitions." Gradually

Quimby grew away from the mesmeric theories which had first attracted him: he had discovered, he said, that he could cure merely by talking.[30] Quimby himself had been suffering from severe kidney trouble, and one day had the courage to turn his own illness over to the clairvoyant powers of Lucius.

> The absurdity of his remedies made me doubt the fact that my kidneys were diseased, for he said in two days they were as well as ever . . . his explanation and remedies always convinced me that I had no such disease, and that my troubles were of my own make.[31]

From this dissatisfaction with the cures he had been practicing, Quimby deduced his guiding principle that "the doctor makes the disease."

Quimby had been practicing faith-healing for twenty years before Mary Baker Eddy came to him to be cured. She was born in 1821; her first husband had died and her second, a travelling dentist and homoeopathic doctor, deserted her. What is described as "an early spinal trouble" kept her in almost constant pain. She was apparently cured by Quimby—although the pain was later to return—and became a convert to his fully-developed belief that he had rediscovered the secret of healing as practiced by Christ.[32] Commentators are right to stress the extent of Mary Baker Eddy's debt to Quimby's system; but what they seem to have overlooked is exactly what that system might have been.

"I then became a medium myself . . ." wrote Quimby some time between 1852 and 1855. He was able to retain his own consciousness, discovering that the ideas of his patients became visible in the form of a vapor surrounding their bodies. "Now when I sit down by a diseased person I see the spiritual form, in this cloud, like a person driven out of his house." At this point his spirit started to "govern" theirs, and induced the patient to tell him of where the trouble began—the reference being to a geographical location, because in Quimby's thought there had to be some concrete incident to cause the illness. Later mental healers

might talk of "a traumatic experience." The cure consisted in bringing the spirit of his patient *away* from the place where the cause of the illness occurred. "Some call it mesmerism, some spiritualism." There was, as he saw it, little difference; and he claimed that mesmerists as well as spirit mediums could be in contact with the dead.[33]

In this context it is worth noting the title of Mary Baker Eddy's first public lecture. It was on "P. P. Quimby's spiritual Science healing disease as opposed to Deism or Rochester-Rapping Spiritualism."[34] In the minds of her hearers there was obviously some confusion. But in January 1866 Quimby died, and the way was open for his disciple to adapt his ideas to her own liking. There is no point in detailing the precise extent of Mrs. Eddy's debt to Quimby or to other sources: the point is that it was from the borderland between Mesmerism and Spiritualism that Christian Science derived its inspiration. What Mary Baker Eddy seems to have done is to add glosses from whatever philosophies she could find to support the idea of "mind over matter," and emphasize heavily Quimby's notion—if it had been Quimby's in the first place—that he had rediscovered the Scriptural method of healing.[35] It is also possible that she had imbibed some of the Orientalist ideas in the New England air. Of the Transcendentalists she knew Alcott and Emerson personally; but only the former took any reciprocal interest in her own teachings.[36] And like many another cult founder, Mary Baker Eddy was unable to resist the temptations of Scriptural interpretation. She even discovered in the tenth chapter of Revelations an angel coming down from Heaven, who prefigures "divine science."[37]

Mrs. Eddy's last years saw a renewal of illness, and the inception of those doctrinal squabbles which beset every cult. She had to wear spectacles, visit dentists, and suffer kidney stones. Against the principles of "mind over matter" she was forced to take morphine to ease her pain. Her increasing debility she blamed on psychic attacks; and when her beloved third husband, Gilbert Eddy, died in 1882 from

organic heart disease she announced in the press that he had been killed by arsenic which had been "mentally administered" by enemies in Boston. Similar aberrations within her following were severely checked; for example, one Josephine Woodbury was expelled from the faith for claiming that a child born to her was immaculately conceived. Mrs. Eddy remained in control of the cult until her death in 1910.[38]

The career of Thomas Lake Harris provides an excellent example of how the diversity of revelation could act upon one man. Harris's life may have appeared to himself to follow a coherent pattern. Indeed it does so, from the point of view of an honest but directionless seeker setting out to find his way in the wilderness. But the bewildering thicket through which he threaded his way is no less remarkable than the coherent, if unappealing theology with which he emerged.

Thomas Lake Harris was born in England, but his parents emigrated to America in 1828 when the child was five years old. His religious career began in 1845, when he became a Universalist minister: an episode that lasted about twenty months. In 1847, as has been mentioned, he became one of the group around Andrew Jackson Davis. But Harris broke with him over a scandal which concerned Davis' preaching of free love, and ended with the Seer of Poughkeepsie marrying the middle-aged lady who had financed the publication of *The Principles of Nature*.[39] S. B. Brittan, another member of the Davis group, contrived to persuade Harris that the poetic reveries which he frequently experienced were inspired by spirits; and at the same time Harris organized a branch of the Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem in New York. The Swedenborgians were at this time undergoing fission. Of the two major groups, one sect was composed of philosophical radicals inspired by the doctrines of Robert Owen and Charles Fourier, and the other of Spiritualist elements, inclined to accept the teaching of Swedenborg as revelation.[40] Neither of these pleased Harris, whose next venture was a

sort of compromise between the two. From 1850 to 1853 he became one of the two directors of the Mountain Cove community of Spiritualists in Virginia, where he and his colleague acted as the mediums through whom the spirits transmitted directions for the colonists. With the failure of Mountain Cove, Harris returned to missionary work for his own small schismatic body of Swedenborgians. On a tour of England and Scotland he first announced his project of forming a society called the "Brotherhood of the New Life" which was to concern itself with the Second Coming of the Lord. This was to take the form of the "reorganization of the industrial world."[41]

The extraordinary community of "the Use" which Harris established first in New York, subsequently on the shores of Lake Erie, finally in California, was the result of this decision. Here life was led in accordance with Harris' personal theology, gathered in part from Swedenborg, in part from Andrew Jackson Davis, with additions of his own, such as his doctrine of the fairies, or "fays"—"such infinitesimal germs of the human race as are not yet received into the (human) auras and procreated in natural-human forms."[42] The members of the Use were disciplined by various disagreeable tasks. For example, Harris's most famous disciple, Laurence Oliphant, the son of rich and titled parents, and himself Member of Parliament for Stirling boroughs, was made to look after cart-horses, and to peddle food on trains which stopped at the local station.[43] Attention has often been directed to the supposed sexual irregularities preached by both Harris and Oliphant. Beyond saying that the theory derived from the Swedenborgian idea of every man or woman having a divine "counterpart" or predestined mate, and had also been preached by Andrew Jackson Davis, there is little point in entering the controversy.[44] There is more relevance in asking why the accusations were made.

In 1875 Harris moved to California, and shortly afterwards Oliphant seceded, as did all the members of the colony on Lake Erie. This was the signal for a new depar-

ture in Harris' thought. The prophet now became interested in Orientalia, in freemasonry, and in "esoteric wisdom." A certain Adept Andonai of the Secret Brothers of the New Life brought him a fresh revelation; and by November 1884 he had written a book called *The Wisdom of the Adepts: Esoteric Science in Human History*, with the avowed aim of combatting Theosophy.[45]

Thomas Lake Harris is important in suggesting to what lengths syncretism could go: his theology was culled from diverse sources and was his personal answer to the problem of faith. It was far from being the most exotic.

From the extremes of the Protestant assertion of the right to believe whatever he chooses to those of the Catholic reaction is perhaps too great a step. The contrast can be made more comprehensible by a brief survey of what was afoot in Christian England. Here there had been a brief outbreak of Millenarianism inspired by Edward Irving. But after the death of the notable preacher in 1834 the fire went out of his movement, and no more were heard the prophesyings and the speaking with tongues which had characterized it in its heyday. His followers drifted nearer and nearer the doctrines of that High Anglicanism[46] which was the most notable response of the Christian mind in England to the crisis.

The beginnings of the Tractarian or Oxford Movement are usually dated to the famous sermon preached in 1833 by John Keble before the Judges of Assize in Oxford, and entitled "National Apostasy." In part a reaction against the enormities of the 18th-century Anglican Church, in part an attempt to stabilize the threatened position of that very Church, the Movement given its impetus by Keble's sermon is a good example of how religious attitudes were determined by events. In one aspect it was an overt reaction against Liberalism, a word as yet scarcely used, and a sentiment viewed with dark suspicion by those who had encountered it.

> It was an attack on Christianity itself. It believed that rational intelligence, education, and civilization would cure all the evils and sorrows of mankind. Its standard was "the ordinary experience of the man in the street." It had no use for reverence, awe, mysticism. Its spirit had burst out in infidel fury at the French Revolution, but it was at work more quietly at this time in lecture rooms of German universities, unknown as yet to Englishmen, save to two strangely well-informed scholars, Mr. H. J. Rose and Mr. E. B. Pusey.[47]

In another aspect, the Oxford Movement was the product of Romanticism, the ubiquitous creature which can equally well be associated with the Liberal challenge. With the Tractarians the romantic appeal was chiefly that of escape into an idealized Middle Ages when the faith had reigned supreme. Mingled with this escape there was present an element of Romanticism in its homocentric form: a re-emphasis on personal mysticism deriving on the one hand from France (Bonald and de Maistre), and on the other hand from the High Romantic poetry of Coleridge.[48]

The curiously well-informed scholar, Pusey, together with two other Fellows of Oriel, R. H. Froude, and the famous John Henry Newman, began to issue a series of *Tracts for the Times* to air their point of view. The Movement gathered support and indefatigable workers like Charlotte Mary Yonge, who issued 160 separate books designed to convey the attitude of the reformers to the youthful and the uneducated.[49] The growth of ritualism and practices associated with the Roman Church gave rise to fears that the Oxford Movement was leading a large section of the Anglican Communion back into the arms of Rome. The conversion of Newman to Catholicism did nothing to lessen these fears.[50] Neither did that of Robert Hugh Benson, son of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Prosecution and persecution followed; and numbers of the Anglo-Catholic faithful left the Anglican Church for Rome or the Irvingites or the Plymouth Brethren.[51] Others somehow remained within it, despite almost incredible eccentricities of belief.

Of those who trod warily between Rome and Canterbury, perhaps the most intriguing are those who attempted to found monasteries. From 1837 onwards there were various attempts to establish monastic life in the Church of England, and it is interesting that the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood itself had at first a religious complexion. Edward Burne-Jones was impressed early in his life by a visit to a community of Cistercians in Leicestershire; and it is possible that the idea of the Brotherhood grew out of fascination with a community of religious artists established in Rome by the German painters, Cornelius and Overbeck. But religious aspirations became aesthetic—in the 19th century they were never far apart—and the Pre-Raphaelites made a different sort of escape from the world of Victorian rationalism to that of the cloister.[52]

In 1863, Joseph Lynne founded his monastery. Better known as "Father Ignatius of Llanthony," this self-appointed Benedictine has to his credit the possibly miraculous cure of a dying horse and an inflexible belief that the world was flat.[53] His last surviving monk, Father Asaph, believed in the Flat-Earth theory till the day of his death in 1959.[54] In 1896 Aelred Carlyle formed another community of Benedictines which in 1901 moved to Caldey Island off the Pembrokeshire coast. In 1913 he and most of his community were converted to Roman Catholicism. Carlyle was throughout his life interested in occultism; the publications of the Society for Psychical Research interested him keenly, and he was convinced that at the funeral of his sister he had seen her astral body detach itself gradually from the coffin and float away.[55] Such beliefs demonstrate that the occult revival could often go hand in hand with Christian convictions, although admittedly both Aelred and Ignatius are extreme examples. More orthodox were the "Cowley Fathers"—the Society of Saint John the Evangelist (founded in 1865 in Oxford), or its offshoot, the community of the Resurrection at Mirfield in Yorkshire (1892). But having said this, it should be noted that R. W. Felkin, a practicing magician and chief of the magical order

of the Stella Matutina—an offshoot of the Golden Dawn —went to New Zealand in or shortly after 1912, probably at the instigation of a Mirfield Father, a member of his Order, who had combined missionary work in the Antipodes with propaganda for ritual magic.[56]

Another organization which had more than a nodding acquaintance with Roman Catholicism was Dr. Frederick Lee's Order of Corporate Reunion. In the summer of 1877, Lee—who was rector of All Saints, Lambeth—was rebaptized. With two other priests, he was received into the episcopate by a mysterious triumvirate of bishops somewhere near Venice.[57] The Archbishop of Milan was actively involved, and Pius IX was persuaded to turn a blind eye to these proceedings. The object seems to have been to establish a number of Anglican clergymen with orders valid at Rome. At any rate, in the same year as his consecration, Lee proclaimed the Order formally and "theatrically" on the steps of St. Paul's. The appearance, later that year, of the *Reunion Magazine* raised a storm about the heads of Lee and his colleagues—one of whom, an ecclesiastical adventurer named Mossman, had actually once written a tract to prove that the primitive organization of the Church had been Presbyterian. The Order survived for some six years, whereupon most of its members submitted to Rome. Lee was himself received into the Roman Church by Cardinal Manning, who travelled to Lincolnshire to be present at his death-bed.[58]

The question of Lee's "orders being valid at Rome" raises the problem of the crop of wandering bishops and clerical mavericks which arose at this period. Some significance must be attached to their proliferation at precisely this point in time. There was a friend of Lee, for example, Richard C. Jackson, who is described as being at one time the Prior of "a somewhat amateur monastery" in the Old Kent Road, a friend of Walter Pater—indeed Jackson claimed to have been the inspiration for *Marius the Epicurean*—and who styled himself "Richard, Archprelate of the Old Catholic Religion."[59] From Lee to Jackson is a

short step. What right did such gentry have to call themselves priests? The short answer is that some of them had every right; for in the Roman Church it is held that a bishop cannot be deprived of his episcopal powers even if he is excommunicated for some major offense. It follows that he can still consecrate other bishops, whose orders will be technically valid; hence that he can indeed start up his private branches of the Church at will.[60] The result has been the emergence of a sort of "Catholic Protestantism" in which schismatics can make nonsense of canon law.

In this way, when in 1713 the majority of the Dutch clergy refused to acknowledge a papal bull condemning Jansenism and consequently left the Catholic Church, their orders remained valid.[61] They formed the "Old Catholic Church," and it was Gérard Gul, the Old Catholic Archbishop of Utrecht, who in 1908 consecrated Arnold Mathew.[62] Mathew was an entertaining character who had once been a Dominican; but he renounced Rome in favor of the more attractive standing of "Count Provoleri di Vicenza, De Jure Earl of Llandaff," which title he coupled to the Old Catholic Bishopric of England. Among his exploits was an attempt to set up a zoo at Brighton. It was through Mathew that Leadbeater of the Theosophical Society obtained his Bishopric. For Mathew's tiny church soon seceded from the Dutch Old Catholics, and by the beginning of the First World War had become seriously infected with Theosophy. The responsibility for this state of affairs was that of James Wedgwood, who had in his youth been a devout Anglo-Catholic, and for some time had stayed with Aelred Carlyle's community of Benedictines. From 1911-13 he had acted as General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in England. But in the latter year the longing for the priesthood overcame him, and Mathew was persuaded to ordain him. By 1916 Wedgwood was a Bishop, and he set sail for Sydney that summer, where he ordained Leadbeater.[63] The control of the little church thenceforward rested securely in the hands of the Theosophists; for in 1915 Mathew had denounced the blasphemous doc-

trines of the Order of the Star in the East, dissolved his episcopal chapter, and submitted himself to Rome.[64]

Several lessons can be learned from this explanation of Leadbeater's Bishopric. First, that among the clergy of the Church of England proper, there was in the early years of this century a measurable interest in Theosophy and matters occult. There was therefore shock among Mathew's small schismatic body when their archbishop condemned such beliefs. Peter Anson notes several examples of Theosophy in the pulpit. For example, the Rev. W. F. Geikie-Cobb of St. Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate, combined Theosophical teachings with "the richest of Anglo-Catholic ceremonial." The Rev. L. W. Fearn attracted large audiences at St. John's, Westminster, with his exposition of reincarnationist doctrine.[65] Further, it can be said that a desire for status—combined with a propensity to issue bogus titles—is a common feature in this type of ecclesiastical adventuring.[66] This manifest insecurity is also typical of occultists. Again, that the most weathercock-like transfigurations can overtake the inhabitants of these regions. Thus Joseph Vilatte, ordained in 1885 by the Old Catholic Bishop of Switzerland, twice became a Methodist, once a Congregationalist Minister, twice a plain Presbyterian, and was four times received back into the Catholic Church.[67]

One general moral: that although these clerical twistings and twinings may seem the cavorting of a few eccentrics, they show the implicit tendencies of a romantic approach to religion. Such developments are so inextricably mingled with those of the occult revival that it is not possible to tell the two apart.

"It is forbidden to read this preface, under penalty of excommunication." This rubric stands at the head of the preface to the second edition of Alexandre Erdan's *La France Mystique*.[68] The first edition had been rather strangely condemned in October 1855 for affronting the

Catholic religion. It is not clear whether this was because of Erdan's implicit agnosticism, or because of his temerity in cataloguing the numerous schismatic occult and religious bodies of Paris. For there was a growth of exotic belief in 19th-century France that far outweighs in interest and ultimate significance any manifestations of the crisis in America or Britain.

The Age of Reason had weighed more and more heavily on the Roman Catholic Church, which looked back (as did the Anglo-Catholic) to an ideal pre-Reformation past. The difference was that for the Anglicans this was a false Romanticism, a yearning for a past non-existent in their tradition which was best met by union with Rome. For the Roman Church, the days before the rending of the seamless robe of Christ were a reality; and the fathers of the Church saw only too clearly that they were facing in a more fully developed form the challenges which had met them during the days of the Reformation. This is how the situation was seen by the Vatican Council of 1870—the first Council regarded by the Church as ecumenical since the Council of Trent:

> No one is ignorant that the heresies proscribed by the Fathers of Trent, by which the divine magisterium of the Church was rejected, and all matters regarding religion were surrendered to the judgment of each individual, gradually became dissolved into many sects, which disagreed and contended with one another, until at length not a few lost all faith in Christ. Even the Holy Scriptures, which had previously been declared the sole source and judge of Christian doctrine, began to be held no longer as divine, but to be ranked among the fictions of mythology.
>
> Then there arose, and too widely overspread the world, that doctrine of rationalism, or naturalism, which opposes itself in every way to the Christian religion as a supernatural institution, and works with the utmost zeal in order that, after Christ, our sole Lord and Saviour, has been excluded from the minds of men, and from the life and moral acts of nations, the reign of what they call pure reason or nature may be established. And after forsaking and rejecting the Christian religion, and deny-

> ing the true God and his Christ, the minds of many have sunk into the abyss of Pantheism, Materialism, and Atheism, until, denying rational nature itself, and every sound rule of right, they labor to destroy the deepest foundations of human society.
>
> Unhappily, it has yet further come to pass that, while this impiety prevailed on every side, many even of the children of the Catholic church have strayed from the path of true piety, and by the gradual diminution of the truths they held, the Catholic sense became weakened in them.[69]

The Pope and his advisers were right. The same problems faced them as at Trent—the redefinition of the one holy and unalterable truth.

The Church could not admit any compromise: if she had been wrong once, every atom of her teaching might as well be false. Her policies were traditional: for the same problems, the same remedies. She would accentuate the spiritual elements in religion, and reaffirm the rock of dogma. There was one God, and Peter was his vicar on earth. When the Pope spoke "*ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians,"[70] he was infallible. Six years before, Pius IX in his notorious *Syllabus of Errors* had stigmatized the principal errors of the day. By categories, these were Pantheism, Naturalism, and Absolute Rationalism; Modern Rationalism; Indifferentism and Lattitudinariansim; Socialism, Communism, Secret Societies, Biblical Societies, Clerico-Liberal Societies; and errors concerning the Church, Society, and Moral and Ethical Standards.[71] In this manner, Rome ranged herself squarely against any trends in society which could be labelled "rationalist," "scientific," or "progressive." She had no choice. Nevertheless the situation created by Pius IX's pronouncement caused such consternation that the Bishop of Orleans was forced to explain—with qualified papal approval—that Pius had been talking of the perfect society, not of what might be practical or even just to bear in mind in the exercise of God's ministry. For this charitable office, the Bishop received the written thanks of 630 fellow-bishops.[72]

The official proclamation in 1870 of the doctrine of Papal infallibility came as one stage in a process. In the *Syllabus of Errors* it had been anathematized as error that "the Roman Pontiff can and ought to reconcile himself to, and agree with, progress, liberalism, and civilization as lately introduced."[73] And well before that date the Papacy had set about promoting a rebirth of popular piety that might take men's minds off socialism and material progress. The Agent of the revival was to be the Blessed Virgin, whose popularity had already been useful in the dark days after the French Revolution, when her festival began to be celebrated throughout Europe in May—"Mary's month"—in opposition to the spring festival commemorating the overthrow of the Bourbons.[74] The cult of the Virgin received fresh papal encouragement during the pontificate of Gregory XVI (1831-46), who promised indulgences to those who wore medals in honor of the Immaculate Conception, gave the Dominicans permission to use the word "immaculate" in the preface to the Mass of the Blessed Virgin; and the Pope himself, with a cholera epidemic at its height in Rome, led a procession through the streets carrying a portrait of the Madonna attributed to St. Luke.[75] Under Pius IX ("the Romantic on the papal throne"[76]) the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was finally proclaimed. The vast majority of bishops to whom the question was put approved of the step; and on 8 December 1854, the first Feast of the Immaculate Conception was emotionally celebrated in St. Peter's with the Dean of the College of Cardinals flinging himself at the Pope's feet.[77] Against the background of continuing Mariolatry—with Pius X (1903-14) Mary, the "corredemtrix," was held up as the best means of knowing Christ—the popular and instinctive flight from reason found expression in a new age of the miraculous.

Exactly what importance to give to the supernatural in the Christian religion has always been a thorny question. It is notorious that the Catholic Church has always to tread carefully in authenticating miracles. The process of

canonization may take centuries. This displays a proper caution, and is in a sense more logical than the attitude of those Christians who claim that their God had withdrawn himself and no longer interferes directly with the workings of his creation. But even this sceptical acceptance of the miraculous brings problems. It might surprise no one to hear that religious ecstatics have in the distant past often been reported to have been lifted above the ground in their transports of joy; but it is a little startling to discover a large number of such levitations reported in the 19th century. In 1836, Joseph Benedict Cottololengo of Bra was observed raised above the ground while giving thanks for his deliverance from an attack in the street. He was beatified in 1917. Mary Magdalen Postel died in 1846 and was canonized in 1925. Levitation was also reported—she had also been teleported to visit her confessor during the French Revolution. To choose among other examples: Saint John Mary Baptist Vianney, the Curé of Ars, Mère du Bourg, the founder of the Sisters of the Saviour of the Blessed Virgin, and Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, are all said to have experienced ecstatic levitation. Mère du Bourg's humility was such that she herself was embarrassed by these occurrences, and would grab at her *prie-Dieu* to prevent her elevation. Sister Mary experienced her first levitation in 1873. Whilst in a convent at Pau she would "instantaneously" climb trees, and perch in the top "like a bird." Once she was seen passing from one tree-top to another. Her Prioress was understandably annoyed and would order her to come down. There is no reason to doubt that these levitations *were seen to take place;* but it is also possible that occasions of extreme stress can well produce reports of such phenomena. For example, a French Dominican was seen levitated by one of the survivors of the wreck of the *Newfoundland* minutes before the ship sank in 1898.[78]

The problem is not to deduce some theory to account for levitations, but merely to indicate that miracles, if not necessarily expected, were in the 19th century very much a living part of the Roman Catholic tradition. What could

be more natural than that a popular reassertion of traditional religious beliefs should manifest itself in connecting the supernatural with the papally sponsored cult of the Virgin Mary? The first of a series of visitations took place in Paris in 1830, with the apparition of the Virgin to Catherine Labouré in the Rue du Bac. In 1842 a Jew, Alphonse-Tobie Ratisbonne, was visited by the Virgin in Rome, with the result that he founded an Order for the conversion of members of his former faith. In 1846, Mélaine Calvat received a visitation at La Salette, where the Virgin revealed an ominous secret to the young shepherdess. In 1858, the most famous of the apparitions took place at Lourdes, where Bernadette Soubirous was seen by large audiences to carry on conversations with someone invisible to them. The series was continued in 1871 with the apparition of the Virgin to three children at Pontmain, in the diocese of Laval; and again large numbers of people watched the visionaries as they described what they saw unfold in the sky above them. It may or may not be significant that the Prussian armies were approaching at the time; and that the next day the conquering Germans in fact reached the neighborhood.[79]

However, apparitions did not limit themselves to those given official recognition, or tacitly approved, by the Catholic Church. Wales in August and September 1880 witnessed apparitions of the Virgin in the community of Father Ignatius at Llanthony. There is some possibility—a slight one—that one, but not all of the apparitions, could have been produced by a magic lantern. This explanation was that preferred by the Catholic Church, alternating with that of simple hallucination. Father Ignatius unintentionally effected a miraculous cure by sending to the nuns of a sister foundation at Slapton a rhubarb leaf from the site of one of the apparitions. A crippled member of the sisterhood was made well.[80] Once more in France, in 1896, various apparitions of the Virgin occurred in the Calvados; for example, that of 18 March when Mary appeared on a pale pink

cloud beside a tall elm tree. Now these were apparently undeniable and widely-witnessed apparitions; but, as one writer put it, "they seem to have escaped from the holy, catholic and apostolic church."[81] Despite a miraculous cure attributed to the holiness of the Elm Tree, and the setting up of a statue of the Immaculate Conception by a grateful family, the Church as a whole looked askance at these affairs.

There was good reason for this. The apparitions were strongly associated in the clerical mind with the heretical cult of the "prophet of Tilly," Eugène Vintras (1807-75). The Calvados was riddled with this heresy. Although by 1898 the days of the cult's greatest popularity were over, the memory of widespread apostasy was too fresh in the clerical mind to enable it to accept as authentic even an apparition seen by no less than six villages. This attitude had earlier been decided by the affair of Rosette Tamisier. "Her" miracles had had no reference to the Virgin Mary: the chief supernatural occurrence was the miraculous stream of blood which issued from the picture of Christ above the altar when Rosette was present in her local church. But at this time any report of the sort from Vintras-tainted Normandy was highly suspect. Despite the local pilgrimages and the great interest of the Paris press, Rosette's reward was an effective imprisonment of fifteen months and the refusal of Communion for the rest of her life. Before her trial in 1851 the great preoccupation had been to link Rosette and Vintras. The trial itself saw a lecture by an Abbé André on the Vintras cult which was very little to the point. The Vintrasian Abbé Charvoz wrote that between Rosette and the prophet of Tilly there was only the connection which all works of God have with one another.[82] Besides showing the traditional caution of the Catholic Church, the incident demonstrates that a revival of popular piety was taking place which had no necessary connection with the Church of Rome at all, although it might manifest itself through the same imagery. This development might

owe something to the Counter-Rationalist policy of Rome, but more likely was an independent response to the crisis of consciousness experienced by so many.

Eugène Vintras, then, was dangerous. What did he represent? For the moment a full discussion must be postponed, but it can be said straightaway that his church, the *Oeuvre de la Misericorde*—the Work of Compassion—was associated with other manifestations of insecurity, both emotional and practical, which were making themselves felt as part of the general crisis.[83] In the context of the Christian response to this crisis, it is convenient here to treat Vintras simply as a heresiarch, which is how his enemies saw him. His own narrative of the beginnings of his religious career starts with the banal and rises to the apocalyptic. One evening he was hurrying to finish his work—he was the foreman of the cardboard-box factory at Tilly-sur-Seine—in order to go to Mass. An old man knocked at his door, cringed suitably, and made begging noises. Vintras gave him some money, but *did not see him leave the house*, and failed to find him hiding outside. The ten sous he had given the old man he found lying on his writing-table. A further puzzling fact was that the old man had addressed him as "Pierre-Michel," although his real name was Eugène. It was as Pierre-Michel that he was to be known during his ministry, until 1851, when he took the title "Strathaniel," meaning "herald of God."

His friends advised him to visit a wise woman of some reputation, a Mme. Bouche, who lived in Paris. Vintras travelled to Paris, and on his way to Mme. Bouche's address in the Place St. Sulpice again met the old man. During his interview with the sibyl, the stranger appeared for a third time, his body glowing with a strange light, and was lifted above the ground. He revealed himself as the archangel Michael. Several other visitations were made to Vintras including, eventually, Christ, Mary, and St. Joseph. It seemed that terrible things were prophesied, before the Golden Age would dawn. On one occasion Michael appeared to

Vintras outside Paris, dubbed the town the "new Nineveh," and told him to behold: "I saw great number of flames surrounding Paris, and heard an innumerable multitude of cries, of which some were 'To arms!' others 'Fire, fire!' . . ."[84]

Now there is a remarkable similarity between the prophecies made to Vintras and those more orthodoxly connected. Among the revelations contained in the Secret of Mélaine Calvet was the fact that in 1864 Lucifer and a great number of demons would leave Hell to destroy the faith of human beings on earth. The Virgin had told the child that the increase of impiety and the non-observance of the Sabbath had so angered her Son Christ that she would not be able to stay his hand much longer.[85] Six years previously Vintras was informed that Raphael had already left Heaven to administer chastisement, that Paris-Nineveh would be punished with London-Babylon. He was also told that the Virgin had never ceased to pray for humanity, and the truth of the Immaculate Conception—still not proclaimed as dogma—was revealed.[86] Widespread anxiety seems to have existed about changes in men and society, and no doubt orthodox Catholic and Vintrasian alike expected the "terrible explosion" which Vintras predicted as "the signal of Hell."

The complex theology evolved by "Pierre-Michel" depended to a large extent on the redeeming power of the Virgin. His *Sacrifice Provictimal de Marie* was a rite designed to cleanse man of his harmful contamination by the material world. The *Sacrifice de la Gloire de Melchisédech* was a preparation for the New Age to come, when the members of the "Carmel," the elect followers of Vintras, should reap the benefit of their laboring to expiate the sins of the world.[87] But his most sensational feat was the production of quantities of bleeding hosts upon his altar—Richard Griffiths records talking with a gentleman who had been shown a chest full of these relics preserved in a Vintrasian chapel until just before the Second World War.[88] It has

been suggested that the doctors who examined Vintrasian hosts and pronounced the stains to be real blood were deceived by a rust-colored mold which under certain conditions will form on wheaten wafers.[89] But whether or not this is the case, the miracle fits directly into the pattern of contemporary piety. Miracles notwithstanding, the Bishop of Bayeux condemned the *Oeuvre de la Misericorde* in 1841; and the following year Vintras was imprisoned on a trumped-up charge of fraud. On his release from prison he spent some time in England before returning to France, where he made his base in Lyon, a city hospitable to many strange religions.

Miracles were thus no monopoly of Rome, and the new Catholic Counter-Reformation must be seen in its proper setting. It is significant that the return of the miraculous to religious life in Europe occurs at the same time as the Spiritualist revelations began to spread. The latter cult has already been characterized as a *primitive* development, a return to ancient necromancy. The evidences of popular piety in the 19th century were no less primitive. On the one hand, there was a Christian doctrine; on the other, a blatant seeking for a sign. Nowhere is this more true than in the sequence of apparitions of the Virgin. Of these Lourdes, with its cult of healing, is most of all concerned with the material signs.

The most important fact about Lourdes is that the visions of Bernadette led to the discovery of a spring of water with supposedly healing properties. It is the nature of Lourdes that it is a place of pilgrimage for the sick, rather than a shrine commemorating a single miracle. The Grotto where the apparitions had occurred had in fact been barricaded off in response to local opinion, when the Prince Imperial of France—His Imperial Highness Eugène-Louis-Jean-Joseph Napoleon, born two years before the Virgin appeared to Bernadette—was taken ill nearby with sunstroke. One of his governesses came post-haste to Lourdes for holy water, the

Prince was cured, and the Emperor telegraphed "*A bas les barricades!*"[90] The healing virtues of Lourdes water were confirmed.

In America the powers of healing claimed for the mesmeric system were a large source of its success. The growth of Christian Science represents another result of faith in the "miraculous." It was by curing himself of his own illness that P. O. Quimby discovered the principles of his doctrine.[91] A "miraculous" cure, after all, can only be classed as miraculous in relation to established medical practice; and during the 19th century an increasingly "scientific" specialist and impersonal attitude to medicine had naturally set in as part of the increasing knowledge. But it seems that there may well be a need to be treated as a whole person, perhaps in a "magical" manner, which expresses itself in recourse to "the primitive nature doctor."[92] The principles of faith-healing are undoubtedly effective in certain circumstances; but a recourse to these methods on a large scale argues a "flight from reason" of the most directly comprehensible sort, an opting deliberately for the magical alternative.

This concern with the material expressions of the religious attitude is also found in the increasing emphasis placed on the use of the rosary as an aid to devotion, particularly in conjunction with the cult of the Virgin.[93] It is no mere theological conceit to see in the actions of the Papacy at this time the expression of the will of Christ's Church. Just as the final proclamation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception had made official popularly conceived belief, probably the advocacy of the rosary merely gave approval to an ever-increasing practice. The very attitude of Counter-Rationalism itself, the condemnation of a long list of apparently ill-assorted attitudes, can to a certain extent be seen as embodying the reaction of large sections of the community. It was not merely the best strategy. In the uncertainty of what had been so certain, Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* achieved the difficult feat of pointing out

exactly what appeared to the Church to be wrong. It is a neat coincidence that 1864 was the year revealed to Mélanie Calvet as that of the assault by the Prince of Hell. For what the *Syllabus* had done was effectively to redefine Satan.

The problem of Evil has always been a thorn in the side of the Christian Church. It will always trouble any religion which holds that God is good, that the established cosmic order is based on some supernal justice, that each soul will meet his proper deserts. To provide an explanation for the troubles and pains which rack mankind, the Christian church developed the Jewish figure of Satan into the spirit of Evil, God's Great Adversary who had been granted license (in one version) to torment mankind in order to test them, or (in another) had been cast out of heaven to lead a rebel existence elsewhere. The nature of Satan is implicit in his origins. The term "satan" originally meant simply any "adversary"; but for a complex of reasons, among which the chief was the desire to dissociate all evil from God, the character of Satan became personalized and his role determined.[94]

Belief in a personal Evil was convenient because the adversary was made comprehensible: a concrete if invisible force who could be fought with the requisite weapons of hope, faith, charity, and the occasional exorcism. But if the very complicated theological problem was thus made intelligible, the solution carried with it the danger of further simplification. God might dispense the justice of Heaven and Hell, but in the here-and-now it might be concluded that the Devil was depressingly powerful. On a higher level there existed the danger of dualism, the doctrine with a long and sophisticated pedigree which holds that two Powers are in conflict over the universe. This is a question considerably older than Christianity; but we are here concerned with Satanism as defined by a traditional, fundamentalist Catholicism.

Satanism in this sense, is simply Devil-worship: wanton propitiation of the Power of Evil in the hope that it will

grant favors in this world. It is often argued that there is something of the perverted in the true Satanist. For what is the object of reciting in the Black Mass a grotesque parody of the sacred ritual if one does not believe that the service is both holy and effective when performed in the correct manner? Seen from the orthodox viewpoint, Satanism always implies a *complete reversal of values.* "It is of faith that Satan is a fallen angel."[95]

In fact there is very little evidence that this form of Satanism has often been practiced. It is difficult to imagine a believing Christian deliberately setting out to spit upon his religion; but a true believer he would have to be if his Satanism were real. The element of caricature in the orthodox picture is at once apparent. On examining any given case of "Satanism" it is rare that it does not prove ultimately to be another form of religion altogether; or, at the worst from the Christian point of view, plain heresy. For heresy is seen as being the Devil's work; and any happening which Mother Church has at any time disliked is open to a similar charge. It is all quite logical. He who is not for us is against us and, by extension, in the pay of the Great Adversary.

Thus the Great Adversary has fathered on him a multitude of unharmonious children. The *Syllabus of Errors* condemned pantheism and other heretical doctrines, but also socialism, communism, secret societies, and other "pests of this description." Thus did the Establishment denounce her opponents, and not her opponents merely in the field of religious doctrine. It is no coincidence that the forces of anti-ecclesiasticism have, ever since the French Revolution, formed alliance with the forces of social revolt. The Church of Rome has always been associated not only by traditions, but also by implicit and explicit doctrine, with authoritarian and paternalistic regimes. In the early years of the 19th century the Holy Alliance had come to use religious teachings with the express purpose of quelling the forces of social unrest. Although the target of the 19th-century revolutionaries was a social complex of which the

Church had become an increasingly smaller part, it is most revealing to examine briefly one specific case in which the Church declared in so many words that it was face to face with the Devil Incarnate.

The dark conspiracy imagined by the Anglo-Catholics to upset the established order had found some sanction in the 1864 *Syllabus of Errors*. Pius IX's condemnation of socialism and secret societies in the same breath was largely the result of his personal observation of the actual Italian political situation, the confusion of which he saw as the product of the agitation of these Satanic forces.[96] Scapegoats were needed; and unscrupulous supporters made sure that they were found. An example is the notorious campaign against the Freemasonic Orders, set on foot by Gabriel Jogand-Pagès, better known as "Léo Taxil."

The Papacy had very early become alarmed at what it knew of the Freemasons. The Grand Lodge of London was formed in 1717. Despite the slow growth of the movement, the Holy See had issued its first condemnation in 1738.[97] Pius IX had repeated the fulminations of his predecessor the year after his *Syllabus* was issued; and Leo XIII's encyclical, *Humanum genus*, explicitly denounced the Masons as attempting to overthrow Christianity and reestablish paganism. The myth of the Satanic Church grew rapidly under clerical supervision; for example, that of Father Joseph Muller of Vienna, or of the Jesuit Archbishop Meurin, whose *La franc-maçonnerie, synagogue de satan*, declared that in the coming kingdom of Anti-Christ, Charleston in the United States was to supplant Rome; and that the Grand Master of the Lodge of Charleston would be the Satanic Pope, the Vicar-General of the Devil on Earth.[98]

To whip up mass emotion against the Orders was the work of Léo Taxil. His early career would not lead an impartial examiner to place great trust in his word. Taxil had distinguished himself as an unscrupulous polemical journalist, whose works had attracted a series of prosecutions. He had, for example, been fined 65,000 francs for a book

entitled *Les amours secrètes de Pie IX*, and edited a newspaper called *L'anti-clérical*. Suddenly, during the years 1885-6, Taxil seemed to change sides. With several collaborators he issued a collection of exposés of Masonry, purporting to show that the Lodges practiced a revived form of the Albigensian heresy of the Middle Ages. The market for such revelations was considerable. For the German translation rights of one such anti-Masonic publication it was possible to ask 50,000 francs.[99]

Taxil's triumph was the creation of "Diana Vaughan." This sinister figure was the High Priestess of a peculiarly Satanic branch of Freemasonry called the Palladium. The present Diana, it was said, was the descendant of a union between Thomas Vaughan, the 17th-century English alchemist, and the goddess Astarte. She was rivalled in her evil intentions only by Sophia Walden, a daughter of Lucifer himself, destined to be the great-great-grandmother of Anti-Christ. Taxil operated his fraud with great skill, publishing periodicals supposedly emanating from the Palladium; and he eventually claimed Diana Vaughan as a convert from her hideous religion to the Roman faith. This coup was the signal for Taxil to publish "Diana's" memoirs. These were received with great rejoicing. Such a conversion was nothing short of miraculous. The Pope himself read the *Memoirs;* and Diana, emboldened by this evidence of her welcome into the bosom of the Church, sent His Holiness a small devotional work which she had composed. Her reward was a papal benediction, transmitted via Cardinal Parrocchi.

Taxil's success was to be his undoing. An Anti-Masonic Conference was convoked at Trent—where it received the papal blessing by telegram—and 18,000 people took part in a procession. Taxil was the hero of the hour. The inevitable request followed: could Taxil produce Miss Vaughan, said to be hidden in a convent from the wrath of her Palladianists? Taxil could not; but despite the thinness of his excuses, the Pope's domestic chaplain wrote to Diana, requesting that she continue to write her praiseworthy

works. It was to popular, and not to ecclesiastical, pressure that Taxil eventually gave in. It was announced that Diana Vaughan would emerge from her retreat on Easter Monday, 1897, to give a lecture to the press in Paris. Taxil, with a coolness which commands respect, appeared instead. To the assembled press he announced that the whole affair had been a deliberate fraud—that his object had been to see how far he could go in duping the Church of Rome. He maintained that the Pope had commanded silence of the Bishop of Charleston, who had written to him defending his episcopal seat against charges of being in reality Pandemonium; that the Bishop of Gibraltar had been similarly silenced when he, too, had written to Rome denying the existence of those underground caves on the Rock where the Palladinists were said to celebrate their rites. No one likes being fooled—and Taxil's deception has lasted for a decade. The author of the scandal escaped from the fury of the press under police protection.[100]

The fact that Taxil's apparently ridiculous deception could discover so many willing believers is an indication of the prevailing insecurity. Mass hysteria on such a scale implies a cause. To discover that Satan was believed literally to walk the earth under gas-lighting is to appreciate some measure of the panic felt at impending change. Masonry was a common scapegoat. America had seen the Anti-Masonic forces as a power in politics. Echoes of the prejudice are to be found in Joseph Smith's *Book of Mormon;* although, this did not prevent the Mormon prophet from later turning to Masonry when he needed ceremonies for his church.[101] But if Satan did not walk literally within the walls of the Lodges, he walked metaphorically elsewhere. Even the clerkly suspicion of the Masons was grounded on the traditionally liberal and anti-clerical role of some of the Orders. The success of Léo Taxil should be seen as mislocation of the real threats—political and social—to the established order. The reaction in certain quarters was not to think out some plan for pacifying the poor, the anarchists, or the areas far from the capital which demanded in-

dependence. It was rather to retreat to a different sort of logic altogether, and one which might well have been thought buried in the womb of the Middle Ages.

The disappearance of Satan has deprived us of a blanket-word to cover all manifestations of which we disapprove. Given the existence of an Establishment culture, or of any strictly regulated society, such a term is exceedingly useful. There was at the end of the last century a conglomerate body of disaffection, which might well be seen as part of the same almost personal entity as the Prince of Darkness. The state could discover Sedition, and the church Satan, and individuals, if so inclined, Evil. The essential of this creature was not a ticking time-bomb, or the number 666, or an unlovely disposition; it was one quality which may well have been entirely in the mind of the beholder. That quality was Opposition.

One of its dwelling-places was Bohemia.

1. It is interesting to compare the architecture of the Counter-Reformation with the Gothic Revival in 19th-century Europe. This comparison probably shows more clearly than any detailed analysis the points of divergence between the two flights of the Irrational, prompted though they were by such similar motives.
2. G. Adolf Koch, *Republican Religion* (New York, 1933), pp. 277 ff.
3. Catharine A. Cleveland, *The Great Revival in the West (1799-1805)* (Chicago, 1916), pp. 85-6.
4. W. W. Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture, 1765-1840* (New York, 1952), p. 306.
5. Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry* (Washington, 1944), pp. 41-3.
6. Nichol, *Midnight Cry*, pp. 135-8.
7. Nichol, *Midnight Cry*, p. 248, quoting Luther Bouteille.
8. Nichol, *Midnight Cry*, quoting Washington Morse.
9. Nichol, *Midnight Cry*, quoting Hiram Edson.
10. Nichol, *Midnight Cry*, pp. 464 and 513.
11. Alan Rogerson, *Millions now living will never die* (London, 1969), pp. 6-9.
12. Rogerson, *Millions . . . will never die*, p. 12.

13. Cf. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, pp. 20-23. The book of Daniel was a favorite of William Miller.

14. Rogerson, *Millions . . . will never die*, p. 28.

15. E. G. Cohn's conclusions, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 282.

16. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History* (London, 1965), pp. 16-20. Invaluable detailed account of Joseph Smith.

17. . Account taken from Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, pp. 16-20.

18. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, p. 30.

19. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, pp. 38-9.

20. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, p. 79.

21. From the *Brief Analysis* prefixed to the *Book of Mormon* (1951 printing of 1920 edition, Salt Lake City, Utah).

22. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, pp. 45-7.

23. Speculation about the fate of the Ten Lost Tribes is a diversion with a hoary pedigree. For some remarks on British Israel, see Chapter 7 and note to it 124 below. The particular tradition of considering the Red Indians the survivors of the Tribes seems to have started with Spanish settlers in America and was introduced to the English-speaking public in 1650 by Thomas Thorowgood, one of the Assembly of Divines. The theory claimed one notable victim contemporary with Joseph Smith. Viscount Kingsborough (1795-1837) was set on the trail of the American Israelites by a Mexican MS. in the Bodleian Library, and issued the results of his researches in his *Antiquities of Mexico* (9 plus volumes). He died in prison where he had been thrown at the suit of a paper manufacturer: his nine-volume work cost the Viscount over £32,000. See A. M. Hyamson, *The Lost Tribes* (London, 1903), pp. 18-21. Neither was Smith's the only religious movement of the early 19th century to appropriate this train of thought. Richard Baxter, a member of the Irvingite circle given to prophecy, once felt inspired to declare the truth of the speculation. Ignatius of Llanthony (for whom see below, this chapter) adopted the theory together with his other eccentric religious and cosmographical ideas.

24. *Book of Mormon*, 3, Nephi, 19, verses 4 ff. This incorporates whole extracts from the New Testament. See 3, Nephi, 11-26.

25. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, pp. 77-8.

26. Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago, 1957), pp. 136-7.

27. For this story, see Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion* (London, 1964), and Nels Anderson, *Desert Saints* (Chicago, 1942).

28. O'Dea, *Mormons*, p. 259.

29. Charles S. Braden, *Christian Science Today* (London, 1959), p. 9. For the significance of homoeopathy, see Chapter 6 below.

30. Horatio W. Dresser, *Health and the Inner Life* (New York and London, 1906), pp. 24-9.

31. Dresser, *Health*, p. 37.

32. Braden, *Christian Science*, pp. 16-18.

33. Dresser (ed.), *The Quimby Manuscripts* (London), pp. 77-9.

34. Braden, *Christian Science*, p. 19.

35. Braden, *Christian Science*, pp. 21-31.

36. Braden, *Christian Science*, p. 36. For her acquaintance with Bronson Alcott, see Robert Peel, *Christian Science, its encounter with American Culture* (New York, 1959), pp. 58-9 et seq.

37. Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health and a Key to the Scriptures* (Boston, 1917), p. 558.

38. Braden, *Christian Science*, pp. 37 ff. "An enemy hath done this" is the constant cry of cultists and occultists in misfortune. See, e.g., the story of the Abbé Boullan told in Chapter 5 below, or the use of the Coulombs as scapegoats by Madame Blavatsky mentioned in Chapter 3 above. Literally dozens more examples could be cited.

39. H. W. Schneider and George Lawton, *A Prophet and a Pilgrim* (New York, 1942), pp. 3-8; and for the scandal, see Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. I, pp. 170-71, who says that it is not clear that Davis was at fault.

40. Schneider and Lawton, *Prophet and Pilgrim*, pp. 21-40. Among the radical Swedenborgians may be ranked the elder William James, father of William and Henry.

41. Schneider and Lawton, *Prophet and Pilgrim*, pp. 47 and 52.

42. Thomas Lake Harris, *Arcana of Christianity*, p. 191.

43. Schneider and Lawton, *Prophet and Pilgrim*, pp. 130-31. For the early life of Laurence Oliphant, see Philip Henderson, *The Life of Laurence Oliphant* (London, 1956), which, however, does not add much to our knowledge of the Use, or of Oliphant's later life and relations with Harris.

44. See Ray Strachey, *Group Movements of the Past* (Lon-

don, 2nd edition, 1934), and cf. the comments of Schneider and Lawton, *Prophet and Pilgrim*, pp. 219 ff. For Oliphant's doctrine, see his *Sympneumata* (Edinburgh, 1885).

45. Schneider and Lawton, *Prophet and Pilgrim*, pp. 423-9.

46. Andrew Landale Drummond, *Edward Irving and his Circle* (London, 1938), pp. 233-5.

47. S. L. Ollard, *A Short History of the Oxford Movement* (London, 1915), pp. 9-10.

48. H. A. L. Steward, *A Century of Anglo-Catholicism* (London, 1929), pp. 54-72.

49. K. S. Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age* (London, 1959), vol. II, p. 266.

50. For a highly-colored account of Newman's conversion, see J. Lewis May, *The Oxford Movement* (London, 1933), pp. 150-52.

51. Ollard, *Oxford Movement*, pp. 129-30. The Brethren, another group dissatisfied with conditions in the Anglican Church, had begun meeting annually in the early 1830s at Powerscourt House, Co. Wicklow. They were convinced that they were not schismatic; merely "separated from Apostasy." See H. H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren* (London, 1967).

52. Peter F. Anson, *The Call of the Cloister* (London, 1964), p. 49.

53. Arthur Calder-Marshall, *The Enthusiast* (London, 1962), p. 195. For the horse, see p. 249.

54. Calder-Marshall, *Enthusiast*, p. 282.

55. Peter F. Anson, *Abbot Extraordinary* (London, 1958), pp. 84 and 292-3.

56. "Inquire Within" (Miss C. M. Stoddart), *Light-bearers of Darkness* (London, 1930), p. 82. This point was brought to my notice by Mr. Ellic Howe. For Felkin's magical activities, see Howe's study of the Golden Dawn, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn (1877-1923)* (London, 1972); also Francis King, *Ritual Magic in England* (London, 1970).

57. H. R. T. Brandreth, *Dr. Lee of Lambeth* (London, 1951), pp. 124 ff.

58. Brandreth, *Dr. Lee*, pp. 128-39.

59. Brandreth, *Episcopi vagantes and the Anglican Church* (2nd edition, London, 1961), p. 107.

60. Brandreth, *Episcopi vagantes*, p. 8.

61. Peter F. Anson, *Bishops at Large* (London, 1964), p. 29.
62. For Mathew's consecration, see Brandreth, *Episcopi vagantes*, pp. 29 ff; for Mathew himself, see Anson, *Bishops at Large*, pp. 156 ff.
63. Anson, *Bishops at Large*, pp. 345-7.
64. Anson, *Bishops at Large*, pp. 200-03.
65. Anson, *Bishops at Large*, pp. 342-3.
66. Cf. Brandreth, *Episcopi vagantes*, p. 3.
67. Brandreth, *Episcopi vagantes*, p. 47.
68. 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1858). Despite the appalling quality of the print, the enquirer is advised to read the second or third editions; the first is written entirely in a revised spelling invented by Erdan himself.
69. From *The Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council concerning the Catholic Faith and the Church of Christ.* A. D. 1870. Translated by Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. II (London, 1877), pp. 236-7.
70. Schaff, *Dogmatic Decrees*, p. 270.
71. Schaff, *Dogmatic Decrees*, pp. 213 ff.
72. E. E. Y. Hales, *Pio Nono* (London, 1954), pp. 261-2.
73. Schaff, *Dogmatic Decrees*, p. 233.
74. Walter Delius, *Geschichte der Marienverehrung* (Munich/Basel, 1963), p. 263.
75. Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, vol. I, p. 265.
76. Delius, *Marienverehrung*, p. 258.
77. Delius, *Marienverehrung*, pp. 258-60.
78. Examples from Oliver Leroy, *Levitation* (tr., London, 1928), pp. 118-34. This collection gives a good idea of how one series of "miraculous occurrences" has been reported at the most unexpected times.
79. Allan Neame, *The Happening at Lourdes* (London, 1968), pp. 187-9. For Mélanie's account of the incident, and her secret, see Richard Griffiths, *Reactionary Revolution*, Appendix, pp. 363 ff. See also Chapter 8. See also Jean Hellé, *Miracles* (tr. L. C. Sheppard, London, 1953), p. 117.
80. Calder-Marshall, *Enthusiast*, pp. 227-39.
81. L. Grange, *Le Prophète de Tilly* (Paris, 1897), pp. 1-2.
82. Maurince Garçon, *Rosette Tamisier* (Paris, 1929), pp. 86 and 95, 99.
83. See Chapter 8.

84. Grange, *Le Prophète de Tilly*, pp. 32-5. Quotation from p. 34.

85. Griffiths, *Reactionary Revolution*, pp. 363-5.

86. Grange, *Le Prophète de Tilly*, p. 39.

87. Griffiths, *Reactionary Revolution*, pp. 127-8. The Vintrasian belief in the New Age as the Third Reign, that of the Holy Ghost, following those of Father and Son, is very similar to the tenets of the Swedenborgians. See Chapter 1. For some political applications of the gospel of the New Age, see Chapter 8.

88. Griffiths, *Reactionary Revolution*, p. 145, note 3.

89. H. T. F. Rhodes, *The Satanic Mass* (London, 3rd edition, 1968), p. 245. E. C. Brewer, *A Dictionary of Miracles* (London, 1884), pp. 489-90, notes four stories of bleeding hosts. Three of these are associated with anti-Semitic superstitions of the Middle Ages; Jews were supposed to have stabbed the hosts. *All* four stories, however, come from French sources.

90. Neame, *Lourdes*, pp. 105-7.

91. Dresser, *Health and the Inner Life*, p. 13, and see text above.

92. Stefan Zweig, *Mental Healers* (tr. E. and C. Paul, London, 1937), pp. xvi-xvii.

93. Delius, *Marienverehrung*, pp. 263-4. When the Virgin later appeared at Fatima one of her requests was for funds to celebrate the feats of Our Lady of the Rosary (Hellé, *Miracles*, p. 117).

94. Edward Langton, *Essentials of Demonology* (London, 1949), pp. 58-9.

95. Walter Farrell, O. P., "The Devil Himself," in *Satan*, intro. Charles Moeller (London, 1951), p. 30.

96. Hales, *Pio Nono*, p. 259.

97. H. C. Lea, *Léo Taxil, Diana Vaughan et l'Eglise romaine* (Paris, 1901), p. 8.

98. Lea, *Leo Taxil*, pp. 10-12.

99. Lea, *Leo Taxil*, p. 14.

100. Lea, *Leo Taxil*, pp. 16-26.

101. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, p. 65 and pp. 279 ff.; O'Dea, *Mormons*, p. 35 and pp. 57 ff. At the time when Joseph Smith discovered his golden plates there was a celebrated court-case in which Masons had been made the scapegoats for murder.

Chapter 5
Visions of Heaven and Hell

BOHEMIA is a land without a geography; but its capital is Paris. Its inhabitants are nowadays spread among many nations; but in the 19th century Paris was the intellectual capital of the world, and the debt of Western man to the successive Bohemias of that city can no more be avoided than the influence of the Italian Renaissance. Two high periods of Bohemian creativity were just before the 1848 Revolution and during the thirty-year period which Roger Shattuck has called

"The Banquet Years"—1885-1914. The influence of Bohemia has not only been felt in the arts, although it has chiefly been experienced there; but also in political and social questions, in whole methods of looking at the world and lifestyles. For within its frontiers Bohemia contained not only artists, sculptors, men of letters, but all elements of vocal opposition to the Established Powers. It is ironical that, although the forces of Opposition were most obvious to the 19th-century Establishment in social and political forms, these more or less blind and *ad hoc* movements were themselves relatively inarticulate. Crowns might tumble, fortunes be made and lost; but ever since 1789 social upheaval had been a fact of modern life. Almost as disquieting to the civilized society of Western Europe—yet greeted with the glee which attends a new sensation—was the progressive outrageousness of the powerless, but vocal, opposition of Bohemia.

Bohemia was nothing if not articulate. In art, in life, its inhabitants contrived more personal expression than was possible in the bourgeois society of the late century and they trumpeted forth their freedom from the rooftops. They were different, frightening, and yet appeared more and more glamorous as the years drew on. The uncomprehending classed them as *poseurs*—and much of the time they were right. However, Bohemia was vocal not with the eloquence of need, but with that of will. The social revolutionaries were to adapt to their own purposes some of the Bohemian critique of society; but the rebellion of this particular underground was more a rejection of the world which reason had built than a protest against injustice. The most interesting and, in the long run, some of the most influential rebellions were those whose progenitors burrowed in the rubble of Western civilization and discovered guides in the philosophies which have been bundled together and named the "occult." In the next chapter we shall discuss just what this term implies. The concern of what follows is to show that the "Occult Revival" of 19th-century Paris was closely bound up with the more artistic or literary levels of

Bohemia. This is chiefly a topographical description of the ground.

At this stage it is enough to have the dimmest idea of what the occult was. It could comprehend Madame Blavatsky's Theosophy, Eastern religion, astrology, geomancy, the Tarot cards, magic, secret societies, and a hundred and one apparently dissimilar beliefs. The clerical eccentrics over whom we have cast an eye might also be included. Any strange, unorthodox, but semi-religious belief can form part of the occult complex. In order to illustrate the lengths to which occult beliefs can be carried, as well as to introduce some of the leading Parisian occultists, we can do no better than to study the affair of the Abbé Boullan, the self-proclaimed successor to the Norman prophet Vintras.

Boullan, a Catholic priest with a decided bent for mysticism and the most sensational aspects of religion, really began his career of heresy in 1856. In this year he met Sister Adèle Chevalier at La Salette (a place of pilgrimage since the apparition of the Virgin to Mélanie Calvet ten years before). Adèle, who claimed to receive frequent messages from a mysterious voice, had come to La Salette on heavenly instructions. Here the Fathers were so impressed that they obtained permission to confide her to the care of the Abbé Boullan, whose experience was well-known in mystical matters. The association prospered. In 1859 Boullan and Adèle founded with the approval of the Bishop of Versailles the *Oeuvre de la Réparation des âmes.* But strange rumors began to escape from the convent of the new order. Boullan was curing "diabolical" illnesses by spitting in the mouths of the afflicted, applying poultices of excreta, or compelling the nuns to drink their urine.[1] He seems also to have begun to practice the sexual rites which were the chief cause of later scandal. In 1860 he murdered a child born to Adèle Chevalier.[2]

Boullan was successively suspended and reinstated. He and Adèle were condemned by the civil courts to three years' imprisonment for fraud. The Abbé continued his

miraculous cures; and he was, on one occasion, summoned by the Archbishop of Paris to explain the case of an epileptic whom he claimed to have cured with *part* of the seamless robe of Christ. At Rome his case was investigated from 1864 to 1869. In the latter year he was imprisoned by the Holy Office, during which period he drew up a confession of faith in a pink notebook to which it is customary to refer in shocked whispers.[3] He was nonetheless absolved and returned to Paris, where he edited a paper called *Les annales de la sainteté,* which exercised some influence over the religious thought of the time.[4] But in 1875 he was finally defrocked; and in December, on the death of Eugene Vintras, he proclaimed himself his successor.

For some time the two had been in correspondence; and Boullan had discovered many points of similarity between his personal heresies and those of the *Oeuvre de la Miséricorde.* The majority of the members of the Work failed to accept Boullan as their chief. Nevertheless, the Abbé established himself in Lyon as the head of a small band of the faithful.[5] He continued to work miraculous cures: for example, by placing consecrated hosts over the ovaries of afflicted women, or by the magical use of precious stones. In Lyon he lived with an architect who was occupied in trying to discover the elixir of life, together with two seeresses of his cult, one of whom lived entirely on bread and milk.[6] It was at this point, with Boullan established as the head of his own schismatic branch of the Vintrasian sect, that the novelist J. K. Huysmans appeared on the scene. By 1893 Huysmans was accusing the Marquis Stanislas de Guaita and a group of Paris occultists of having caused the death of Boullan by black magic. This *cause célebre* can bear retelling, because it reveals by degrees the existence of an occult underground in Paris whose activities must be investigated further. How could Huysmans have come to believe in magical murder?

Huysmans had discovered the Abbé Boullan while researching material on Satanism for his novel *Là-bas.* In the summer of 1891 the novelist had gone to stay with

Boullan in Lyon. He attended ceremonies in the Abbé's sanctuary, at which his host had used the rites of Vintras to combat the machinations of his enemies in Paris, Bruges, and Rome. Among these enemies were Stanislas de Guaita, his future secretary, Oswald Wirth, and a fellow-occultist, Joséphin Péladan.[7] To this enmity there are two sides. To take first the story of the occultists.

In 1879 Oswald Wirth had met Boullan at Châlons-sur-Marne, where Wirth enjoyed some reputation as a magnetizer. Boullan had appeared in the town and performed a miraculous cure. Wirth and he then entered into correspondence. With the connivance of the Abbé Roca, another priest defrocked for heresy, Wirth began to worm from Boullan his most secret doctrines. Soon the two "prospective converts" had contrived to made the Abbé admit his theory of "mystical unions" by which the sexual act could be consecrated as a rite of spiritual regeneration. Roca investigated further, and found that Boullan claimed also to be coupling with *humanimaux*, beings half-animal and half-human, to whom he believed he could in this manner give a purely human form.[8] In 1886 Wirth informed Boullan by letter of his true intentions. With Roca he laid the evidence before a tribunal of occultists, headed by their mutual friend, Stanislas de Guaita. Wirth claimed that the tribunal condemned Boullan merely to public denunciation.[9] On the other hand, Huysmans was in Lyon shortly after the death of Boullan when there arrived a letter signed by de Guaita condemning the Abbé to "death by the fluids."[10] This is part of the evidence for the other side.

Now de Guaita had, independently of Wirth or Roca, made his own overtures to Boullan. He was probably introduced to the Abbé by another occultist, the Marquis de Saint-Yves D'Alveydre, in 1885. In an attempt to learn the secrets of Boullan's power, de Guaita went himself to stay with Boullan. He left after a fortnight having pocketed the manuscript of the Vintrasian *Sacrifice de la Gloire de Melchisedéch*, which the Abbé regarded as the supreme

magical text. De Guaita had scarcely gone, wrote Boullan to Huysmans, when he felt himself in the grips of a heart-attack. He turned to Mme. Thibault—the seeress of the bread and milk—who used her supernatural powers to tell him it was the doing of de Guaita. He staggered to his altar, and managed to protect himself by repeating the ritual of the *Sacrifice of Melchisédech* which counteracted de Guaita's attack. It is always extraordinarily difficult to account for the quarrels of occultists—and Boullan's conviction that he was being attacked by de Guaita might have nothing more behind it than the word of the "seeress" Mme. Thibault, who had somehow taken a dislike to the Marquis. It is usual among those who have studied this episode to mistrust everything which Boullan told Huysmans about de Guaita. But a quarrel there must have been, because the Marquis and the Abbé were at one time very close. Joanny Bricaud records his possession of a first edition of de Guaita's earliest book on magic with an inscription by the author to Boullan.[11]

At any rate, the rupture took place c. 1886. And at the time of Huysmans's visit to Boullan it was against de Guaita and other Paris occultists that the Abbé believed he must protect himself.[12] The rites which he directed against Péladan and de Guaita must have been impressive, if only as an indication of Boullan's convictions; for after the publication of *Là-bas*, Huysmans believed that he himself had been the victim of de Guaita's attacks, and that only the intervention of Boullan—who performed rites for him and gave him some of Vintras's miraculous hosts—had saved him. After the Abbé's death Huysmans was more haunted than ever, and he was only rescued from his neurotic state with the help of the seeress Julie Thibault, who continued, as Husymans's housekeeper, to celebrate the rites of Vintras in Paris.[13]

Huysmans, in the words of one of his contemporaries, had a terrible tendency "to believe what he read,"[14] and his suggestibility was to lead to further ramifications. The novelist's friend Jules Bois, a journalist, who shared his in-

terest in occult matters, possessed the same credulity. He was later to print documents given by Boullan to Huysmans containing the information that at every court of Europe magical evocations were practiced, and that Prussia crushed France at Sedan because of her superior evocatory powers.[15] Bois learned of Huysmans' opinion of de Guaita, and he published an article formally accusing the Marquis of magical murder. The alleged method recalls Mary Baker Eddy's accusations against her own hypothetical enemies. De Guaita, said Bois, volatilized poisons and directed them into space. What was equally sinister, he kept a familiar spirit shut up in a cupboard. Next day Huysmans confirmed the accusations in an interview he gave to *Le Figaro*.[16] De Guaita responded with the challenge to a duel.

The two seconds chosen by de Guaita were his friend Maurice Barrès, and the poet Victor-Emile Michelet. They met Huysmans in his office at the Ministry of the Interior, and Michelet delivered de Guaita's letter: "I intend to demand satisfaction, not with the occult weapons which you pretend to fear, and which I do not employ, but honorably, and sword in hand."[17] Huysmans was sensible enough to retract, and to publish a form of apology. Jules Bois, on the other hand, renewed his attacks. Meanwhile, there was so much skirmishing among the seconds that Michelet had to resign to fight a duel of his own, and two new seconds were appointed—one of whom, Laurent Tailhade, through his anarchist opinions contrived to become involved in twenty-three duels, one with Maurice Barrès, in which Tailhade lost a finger.[18] Affairs were eventually settled so that Bois, who persisted in his accusations, was to fight *two* duels, one with de Guaita, the other with a colleague of that nobleman, Gérard Encausse, who wrote under the name of "Papus." On 12 May 1891 the first duel, with pistols, took place at Meudon. Bois set out expecting conjurations against him: these of course materialized. On the way to the duelling ground, one of the horses drawing the journalist and his seconds stopped dead in its tracks, and remained shivering for twenty minutes before it could be persuaded

to continue. The shots were exchanged without injury. But the armorer who had charge of the pistols later discovered that the bullet of one had not fired. By that stage there was no discovering whose pistol it was, although Bois had little doubt. On his way to the second encounter the horse fell between the shafts. He took a second carriage, with the same result. This time the carriage overturned, and Bois arrived on the ground much the worse for wear.[19] The genial Papus, who besides being an occultist was a skilled swordsman, wounded him slightly in the forearm; and they walked off the field the best of friends.[20]

Names, names, names! A marquis, assorted poets, novelists, renegade clergymen, occultists proper, a journalist: Paris of the 1880s and 1890s was evidently productive of a widespread interest in the occult. Of the occultists, de Guaita and Péladan are the most important. But what is J. K. Huysmans, a novelist of considerable standing, doing in this curious imbroglio? There is much to be gathered from Huysmans' mere ability to believe what he was told by Boullan; yet the situation, comprehending poets, artists, and intellectuals, was considerably more complicated than a simple readiness to believe in the miraculous. It was more complicated because these people, individualistic and thoughtful by calling—or, if not that, at least inclined to theorize—were prone to *thinking* about the miraculous, rather than responding according to more or less conventional patterns. Some of the more daring spirits were even inclined to apply what they had learned. Others were baffled by the mushroom growth of the occult.

In 1889 Adolphe Retté and his fellow-Symbolists were at a loss for a printer. A friend who worked in the Post Office and read Swedenborg recommended one, a certain "Arcturus," whose office Retté found on inspection to be surrounded with "vaguely Tibetan" inscriptions cut out of gilded cardboard. Still, poets must have printers, and Retté handed over his letter of introduction to Arcturus. He read it, and enquired "Are you adepts?" Retté, who tells this

story in a spirit of ridicule, was informed enough to make a passable showing. "I said that I had read some books on Hermetism, that I had seen M. Péladan cover himself in a scrap of red Turkish carpet that served him as vestments. . . ." He them craftily asked for instruction. Arcturus began to talk: the astral, *karma*, de Guaita, Papus. Occult terms and the names of occultists poured from him. After half an hour Retté was able to stop the tirade and tactfully enquire whether he and his friends would be printed. Arcturus replied that he would have to consult his familiar spirit. The next day, however, the oracle proved favorable, and from this source the second *Vogue* appeared, with contributions from Paul Adam, Henri de Regnier, and Gustave Kahn.[21] The last-named, in his account of the various literary movements of the era, found it necessary to dissociate himself and the Symbolists from the occult movement. They were mystics, of a sort, he admitted, but not occultists "—at least not M. Jean Moréas and I."[22] The "at least" is telling. Some Symbolists were certainly occultists, and the temper of Bohemia was such that the two camps might easily be confused. As the incident of Retté and his printer shows, the literary and the occult worlds might have to share a bed.

Jules Bois noted in his journalistic travels round Paris that the supernatural had penetrated both the fashionable world and artistic society.[23] There was Camille Flammarion the astronomer who was a confirmed Spiritualist. The musician Augusta Holmès received messages from beyond. Paul Adam was visited by an evil spirit. Painters and writers without number owed some inspiration to the cult of the irrational.

In the Place Sorbonne the classical and Oriental scholar Louis Ménard told Bois of his enthusiasm for the Greek gods, but disclaimed any intention of making disciples. He had, he said, had a single disciple, who had unfortunately gone mad. One day the poor fellow had come to Ménard and told him that after a night of prayer Brahma had revealed to him that Ménard was the Holy Spirit. Shortly

afterwards the disciple had jumped out of the window, shouting that he was as happy as the gods.[24]

Amongst the explosion of artistic activity, the zany tempo of life, the advent of satirical cabarets like the *Chat Noir*, the growth of the occult was an integral part of Bohemia. In the cabarets themselves the posturing poets adopted the mystification of the occultists. Hieratic prose and incantation were recognizable targets of parody.[25] The most successful popularizer of occultism in France, Papus (Gérard Encausse), was a great boulevardier and *bon viveur*, who from the inception of the *Chat Noir* was a regular attender.[26] From the Theosophists of Paris, grouped round Félix-Krishna Gaboriau's *Lotus bleu*, Papus moved to alchemical and magical topics, founding with Lucien Chamuel the Librairie du Merveilleux and its review *L'Initiation* in 1888. Chamuel may possibly have been the "Arcturus" of Retté's story; for his publishing business continued to print novels as well as occult literature. More occult reviews appeared, the most important being *La Voile d'Isis* (founded 1890). The popularizing genius of Papus—much frowned upon by his more stuffy colleagues—impressed it on his widening audience that "occult science" was a force to be reckoned with. Its presence was taken for granted as an intellectual fashion which would either be absorbed into established knowledge, or in time rejected.

Because this is not a chapter in the history of literature, or even of the 1890s, there is no room for an extended discussion of the aesthetic theories of the time. But several points must be made if the significance of the occult is to be appreciated. There was thought by critics to be a "Satanic" school of literature, whose high priest was Baudelaire. It was distinguished by a certain perversity, an insistence on plumbing the depths of human experience not only to the extremes of pleasure, but also to those of degradation. Part and parcel of this movement, although apparently far divorced from it, was the school of thought which, when it arrived in England, was known as the "Aesthetic" move-

ment. But, indeed, Satanism and Aestheticism were equally confounded with other critical definitions—Decadence and Symbolism. The important point is not the difference which might be found to exist between a "Symbolist" and a "Decadent," but the uniform reaction professed by members of all these schools against what had gone before.

As in general terms the reaction against rationalism had set in, in aesthetic terms the reaction was against naturalism. What was "reasonable" and what was "natural" ran hand in hand and were the outcome of a certain way of looking at the world. Added to this was a form of social protest, occasionally political, but more often directed against moral standards, and always against the bourgeoisie. As Victor-Emile Michelet said, referring to Baudelaire: in the land of Bohemia, a poet or a gentleman could do what they would, while a bourgeois would be thrown out on his ear.[27] An artistic rebellion was brewing, impatient with what was. Society, considered to be in the age of Reason and Science, implied naturalism, rationalism, and a fixed code of behavior. The conditions in which the bourgeois made his money and sold his soul through a virtuous cynicism were simply unacceptable. With a seriousness which is difficult for the 20th century to realize, the Bohemians, in the midst of their posing and their legendary debauch, set out to find their own solutions.

They set out, therefore, with assumptions which were anti-rationalist and anti-materialist, to produce anti-naturalist art. Because this approach was based on a total rejection of the world it may be legitimate to call it "spiritual." Whether it led to "Satanism," or the cult of the Beautiful, the face this reaction presented to the public was uniformly rebellious.

At the same time the Age of Reason had confronted the poets with the problems which every thinking man had to face. They were introspective either by temperament or as the result of a long sojourn with Romanticism, and the horrible reality of the human condition impressed itself on their consciousness with great force. "O, Satan," cried

Baudelaire, "take pity on my long misery!" Hymns to Satan, verses on prostitutes, the vileness of human nature formed the subject-matter of the tortured poet. The fact that Baudelaire and others hoped to come through the fire and emerge on the other side was largely ignored by observers, who read his verse, heard of his *Club des Haschischins*, and saw Satan poetically incarnate.[28]

For the moment we shall ignore the more esoteric side of these doctrines, and concentrate upon what was seen by the world at large. The book which was seen as the "bible" of the movement was J. K. Huysmans' *A Rebours*—which Oscar Wilde admitted was the mysterious and corrupting book given to the hero of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Des Esseintes, the hero of Huysmans' novel, is perversity itself. He encourages a friend to marry—only when he is sure that as a married man he will live in a flat with circular rooms requiring unusually shaped furniture. The acquisition of such furniture will be a costly process, reasons Des Esseintes. The couple will be forced to move to another and cheaper flat, *into which their expensive furniture will not fit*, and the marriage will consequently break up. So it turns out. On the same principles, Des Esseintes picks up a boy in the streets, and introduces him to the luxury of Parisian brothels. The Madame is puzzled by what she sees as a new foible of her customer. His aim, Des Esseintes assures her, is in fact to make the boy a murderer. By accustoming him to pleasures which he cannot afford, the boy may be driven to a life of crime and vice.

One more example may be given of the face that his attitude presented to the public. The bitterness with which life is described in *Les chants de Maldoror* made the work something of a "black" book. In a second edition in 1890 it caught the attention of the avant-garde. Maldoror was at first virtuous and happy: "later he became aware that he was born evil." The warning he issues to his readers will be enough: "You who are now gazing upon me: stand back, for my breath exhales poison. No one has yet seen the green furrows in my forehead, nor the protruding bones of my

emaciated face, resembling the bones of some great fish. . . ."[29]

Nevertheless, to the Artist—the term was now being spelled with a capital letter—who might find his gods in the world's gutter, such misery was only to be exploited. Hence to see whether he could transcend misery, Baudelaire had smoked hashish. Others, in England and France, turned to the pursuit of vice and degradation, in the brothel, in the tavern, in the poorest quarters of town. For this species of Artist, who was intent in pushing mere physical sensation to the utmost, Verlaine coined a name: *poète maudit,* accursed poet. And indeed, there did seem to be something mildly Satanic in an obsession with drugs and drink. But the core of the theory was an occult doctrine which attached value to suffering and rejected the world as an end in itself.

The other side of the picture was the so-called "Aesthetic movement." This chiefly English phenomenon was a debased form of the French response. The outward forms of this attitude were a concentration on the value of personal experience, and the cult of the Beautiful for its own sake: it was essentially a pursuit of the Beautiful having denied the Good. The excesses of this school are familiar through the activities of Wilde and the parodies of W. S. Gilbert:

> Though the Philistines may jostle, you will rank as an apostle in the high aesthetic band
> If you walk down Piccadilly with a poppy or a lily in your medieval hand.

This posturing—for so it appeared—was "aesthetic," with a sneer; or "decadent" without one. In England, this could mean "unmanly" or effete. In France, where the term was coined, it was more specific. Among the *poètes maudits* there was a concentration on so-called "declining" periods. Baudelaire had been forever talking about a translation of Petronius which he never exècuted, while Laurent Tailhade—he of the twenty-three duels—actually did one. There was also the heavy shadow of the defeat by Prussia at Sedan: the Prussians could be seen as barbarians,

and Paris as Rome or Byzantium, the last outpost of culture and civilization.[30] This resulted in a consciousness of being at the end of an era which added conviction to the pose.

To those to whom the attitude was more than a pose, we are indebted for an extraordinary outburst of creative ability. The idea of the "aesthetic movement" was essentially a corruption of the doctrine of the French Symbolists. The idea of the symbol is a complicated one. A simplification would be to say that while the debased aesthetician would go into vapors over the beauties of his poppy or his lily, the true Symbolist would see in that beauty merely the reflection of something most purely beautiful beyond (as a Christian might talk of a glorious day as being somehow the reflection of God). This doctrine has many direct links with occult tradition; and if correctly understood, it represents as much as "Satanism" a rejection of the world.

Thus, for the artist who made his escape from society, two main roads lay open: the path to Heaven and the path to Hell. These directions proved to be well sign-posted by the occult. Generally speaking—it may be something more than a question of the inspired following the inspirers—poets took the downward path while artists looked upward. This twin response is exactly duplicated by the occultists. To simplify what seems a complicated development, we shall pair two couples of Artist-occultists to point the similarity. On the fringes of the infernal regions we find Baudelaire in the company of Stanislas de Guaita. En route to the Absolute are discovered at least one manifestation of Oscar Wilde (though he also had his moments of vertigo by the Abyss) preceded by Joséphin Péladan.

The occult revival in Paris had begun much earlier than the eighties and the nineties of the century. But from the point of view of later developments, the first significant date is probably 1884—the first Symbolist publications came out two years later. Now 1884 not only saw the publication of *A rebours,* but also of another novel, which in its day attained a similar notoriety, achieving some twenty editions by the

turn of the century. This was Joséphin Péladan's *Le vice suprême*, the first of a sequence of novels which its author called *La décadence latine*. Like many others, the Marquis Stanislas de Guaita, of whom we have already made the acquaintance, was overwhelmed by this compendium of perversity and occult intimations. He therefore entered into relations with Péladan, who introduced him to the text-books of his particular brand of occultism.[31] Thus two of the most significant figures in the occult revival were brought together. It is worth noting that although both have become known as occultists, they originally made their name as men of letters.

Stanislas de Guaita (1860-98) arrived in Paris at the age of twenty with his closest friend, Maurice Barrès. Barrès was to achieve greater literary distinction than the Marquis, but de Guaita made his debut with verse very much in the approved fashion of the *poète maudit*. There was *La muse noire*, for example, of 1882. But by 1885 his collection *Rosa mystica* had explicitly combined his more strictly literary heritage with a predeliction for the occult. Shortly after reading Péladan's *Le vice suprême*, de Guaita had his fellow-occultist to stay. The arrangement was only of the most temporary nature, owing to the impossible temperament of Péladan.[32] But de Guaita himself was selected by a contemporary to illustrate the arrogance typical of the young poets of the day. After listing all the modern poets with whom he was personally acquainted, the future Magus admitted grudgingly that there might be others; but they did not, he said, come to his café.[33] It is as a poet that he is mentioned, not as an occultist.

Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918) came from a mystical background. His father was a school-master who edited a fanatically Catholic and royalist paper called *Le châtiment*, was ceaselessly re-interpreting the Apocalypse, and issued every year his *Annales du surnaturel*, a compendium of miracles and prophecies. At one point he proposed a new cult—that of the sixth wound of Christ, caused (he said) by the blow of the Cross on the shoulder of Jesus when he

slipped and fell on the way to Calvary. This wound he claimed as much the most severe, because the Cross was heavy with the sins of the world. Péladan senior was actually allowed to carry on a trade in pious objects connected with this wound (and Péladan's mother continued the business after her husband's death).[34]

The greatest influence on Joséphin was his elder brother Adrien, a homoeopathic physician and student of the Cabala, who introduced Joséphin to mystical literature. Adrien had learned Chinese at the age of sixteen, in order one day to become eligible for the newly created Chair in that language at Lyon. He was befriended by a circle of romantic Orientalists, becoming a founder-member of the Société Asiatique. In this august body his views remained suspect. Small wonder that this was so, for his chief mentor was one de Paravey, author of a treatise on "Hieroglyphic documents on Noah's Flood, brought from Assyria and preserved in China and America."[35] Through Adrien, de Paravey's obsession with Assyria and Chaldea was to be transmitted to the younger Péladan, who always held his brother in the highest esteem, attributing Adrien's death in 1885 not to the short-sightedness of the homoeopath when compounding a medicine, but, in true high Catholic fashion, to the malice of a Protestant chemist in Leipzig.[36]

Péladan's Catholic convictions brought him trouble with the law in 1880, when he was arrested for protesting against decrees against unauthorized religious congregations. In court the young man began to expound his theory that Catholicism was the only source of Art. He was fined only fifteen francs on the grounds that he was an eccentric.[37] Undeterred, the youthful zealot nourished his aesthetic faculties on a tour of Italy. In 1883 he arrived in Paris where he quickly penetrated literary circles, creating an initial sensation with his criticism of the Salon of 1883,[38] with its text—"I believe in the Ideal, Tradition, and Hierarchy." His criticism of the actual paintings is relatively banal, but the thing to notice is that Péladan arrived in the world of the aesthetes with his own ideas cut-and-dried. These ideas

were similar to those of the Pre-Raphaelites in England, but set in the context of the time and place. "Beware of color photography!" he scornfully advised the artists of 1883, and he prefaced his criticisms with two declarations.

1. All artistic masterpieces are religious, even amongst unbelievers.
2. For nineteen centuries, artistic materpieces have always been Catholic, even amongst Protestants.[39]

Thus the critic ranged himself squarely on the extreme of the Catholic reaction, an attitude which he was to maintain even in his occult dealings. He also made much of the decadence of the Latin races—they were in "metaphysical peril" thanks to the efforts of Renan and his band of materialists.[40] The next year was to see the publication of Péladan's *Le vice suprême.*

The book which brought de Guaita and Péladan together was a production of its time, but also very much of the man. There is about it much of the perverse, and an insistence on merely physical sensation. As early as page three the reader is introduced to a princess "deliciously savoring brutish ecstasy." But the hero of the narrative, Mérodack—all Péladan's names are taken from Assyrian mythology—is a magician, in the author's very special sense of the term: someone who is totally in control of himself. Mérodack, supposedly a portrait of the unfortunate Adrien Péladan, "a poet inconsolable that he was not a genius, a mystic overwhelmed not to be a saint,"[41] might also stand for Joséphin himself. He has had a pious childhood. Although he has learned something of the Cabala and occultism he remains strictly orthodox. His vocation as a magician compels him to conquer all natural vices. But such is his commitment to this course of action that he must summon up temptations deliberately. For example, he flirts with a girl until she allows him in through her bedroom window, but then he behaves with "a monstrous continence,"[42] magnetizes her, and watches over her till dawn. As part of his self-discipline, Péladan adds, he even gives up smok-

ing. His occult Master, the Cabalist Rabbi Sichem, has adopted another way of becoming a superman, and Mérodack admits a third: this is the way of Father Alta, a dissipated aristocrat turned Dominican. Toward the end of the novel Mérodack and Alta are face to face: "the two miracle-workers, the Prodigy of Grace, and the Prodigy of Will, the Monk and the Magician. . . ."[43] To the tortured soul of the *poète maudit*, this seemed very like saying that there was a way out of the trap after all. De Gauita and Péladan are important because they typify the response of the Decadent era to the crisis of consciousness. In purely literary terms, de Guaita was indeed the Baudelaire of the movement; and Péladan—it does not take much imagination to see the transformation—a high Catholic Oscar Wilde.

De Guaita and Péladan, the aesthetic and the accursed magicians, took it upon themselves to revive the Rosicrucian Brotherhood, a society which ever since the 17th century had been traditionally credited with being the repository of ancient secrets. In September 1885, Péladan had declared himself Grand-Master of the *Rose-Croix* on the death of his brother Adrien, who had been initiated into a by this time moribund branch of Freemasonry claiming succession from the legendary Rosicrucians.[44] In 1888 Péladan and de Guaita revived the *Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix*, and in view of the subsequent rumpus it is possibly as well to bear in mind that Péladan was the first to proclaim himself a "Rosicrucian." The *Rose-Croix* consisted of three degrees—"Biology," "Theory," and "Practice." It was directed by a Council of Twelve, of whom six were known and six remained unknown to carry on the Order if it were broken up. In 1890 de Guaita claimed over a hundred adherents for his Order.[45] That this figure was ever reached seems extremely unlikely. The six "Hidden Chiefs" never existed. Besides de Guaita, Péladan, and Papus, Paul Adam and Marc Haven (the latter a disciple of Papus who replaced Péladan on the Council) are the only names worth mentioning among the six main participants.

These were mostly young. Two older members, respected in occult circles, were Alfred Faucheux (alias "Barlet"), a disciple of that Saint-Yves D'Alveydre who had introduced de Guaita and the Abbé Boullan; and a Dr. Charles Melinge who was pseudonymed "Alta" after the character in Péladan's novel. In this *Rose-Croix* there was, says one contemporary, a great deal of foolishness.[46] Its existence is important insofar as it was part of Bohemia, a Bohemia which sometimes grew annoyed with subtleties it could not understand. One evening Emile Gordeau, of the *Chat Noir*, was present at a Rosicrucian meeting at which the magicians were discussing the Parabrahm—the Perfect God who, according to certain theories, divided his being throughout Creation. Goudeau listened in mounting impatience to the metaphysics bandied around the room, and eventually exploded. He did not understand, he cried, why *ce cochon de Parabrahm*, who enjoyed perfection, had to split himself up at all![47] It is easy to sympathize with the *cabaretier*.

In 1890 took place what the occultists were to call the "War of the Two Roses." All seem to be agreed that the main cause was the incurable self-importance of Péladan, in whom a real sense of mission was mingled with an exhibitionism worthy of several Oscar Wildes. It is only fair to him to state that if eccentricity was not necessarily expected of an Artist, it was to a certain extent approved. He adopted the title of "Sar," or King, in Assyrian. He took to calling himself by the name of the Assyrian god Mérodack which he had given to his character in *Le vice suprême*. His dress was always eccentric, varying from the mediëval, with ruffles and lace, to the Oriental robes which attracted accusations of transvestism. These would alternate with more or less ecclesiastical vestments and the traditional garb of Bohemia. The hair and the beard of Sar Mérodack were luxuriant and remarkable. Some of this exoticism in dress he had absorbed from his friend and early encourager in Paris, J.-A. Barbey d'Aurevilly, whose own gorgeous ruffs and silks were complemented by his habit of producing a

powder-compact in trams and making up his face.[49] It is easy to see where Wilde derived his ideas on aesthetic costume. Péladan himself was an obvious target of raillery; and Jules Bois' satirical observations are typical of many:

> When Parisian *cuisine* bored him, he would be off to wreak havoc among the hearts of sentimental provincial girls. He would be seen in a medieval doublet passing through Marseilles cafés, and he used to hide under an opera-cape his walking-stick, which beneath the folds he passed off as a sword. . . .[50]

But with Sar Mérodack these foibles usually assumed the character of the occult, the hieratic, the clerical. And it was in May 1890 that the Sar issued three arbitrary mandates, signing them with his assumed title and his personal Rosicrucian motto, *Ad Crucem per Rosam, ad Rosam per Crucem, in ea, in eis gemmatus resurgeam.* To his fellow-Rosicrucians, already disposed to annoyance at the antics of the Sar, these productions were the last straw.

The first of Mérodack's *Acta Syncelli* was directed "To all those of the graphic arts. Greetings in Plato and Leonardo and Blessings in Jesus Christ." This called upon all artists to submit to the Sar's direction in aesthetic matters. The second was addressed to the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, and announced its author as the Grand Master of a concealed Catholic intellectual elite, heir to the secrets of the Rosicrucians and the Holy Vehm.* The complaint of Sar Mérodack was that bull-fighting had just been introduced to Paris: he denounced the Plaza de Toros of the Rue Pergolèse as "a place of corruption where women go in search of orgasm and where they obtain orgasm." He had been asked to escort ladies to such exhibitions of brutality, and peremptorily requested His Eminence to stop the female bestiality of this resort of "the eighth sort of luxuriousness." The Sar concluded his most Catholic address by informing the Cardinal that according to the esoteric

*A sinister German secret society which had dispensed its own justice.

hierarchy, he remained his most respectful suffragan. His third decree was a personal aesthetic condemnation of a woman member of the Rothschild family, who had bought the château of Beaujon, and was proposing to knock down the chapel, "a curious example of the transition from the style of Louis XVI to that of the Empire." This condemned the hapless chatelaine in the name of all the religions, all the arts, and the *Rose-Croix. Ad Crucem per Rosam, ad Rosam per Crucem. . . .*[51]

Crisis among the Rosicrucians! Respectable occultists and littérateurs, they were tarred with the same brush as that with which half of Paris tarred-and-feathered the rabid Sar. First brotherly remonstrations, but these were met by a manifesto in Péladan's best hieratic style—reminding the *Rose-Croix* that of them all he had been the first to incorporate occult theory in his critical and literary works; disdaining various doctrines which obtained amongst the *Rose-Croix;* utterly rejecting Spiritualist concepts, Buddhism, and Freemasonry; and reverting to his High Catholic pose with the signature "Sar Mérodack Péladan, Roman Catholic Legate." Péladan then announced the formation of a new Order, the *Rose-Croix Catholique,*[52] which was to have a short but considerable influence on the world of the visual arts.

Before considering the further activities of Péladan and his colleagues of the aesthetic occult, the significance of de Guaita must be assessed. The two men responded to the pressures of the time both as occultists and men of letters. If the Sar ascended to the empyrean of aestheticism the Marquis performed the endless descent into the abyss of the *poète maudit.* The comparison with Baudelaire was made by contemporaries. De Guaita himself spoke often of the "Satanist" poet.[53] De Guaita, wrote Jules Bois, who believed in the Marquis' familiar spirit and his magical murders, lived alone in a ground-floor flat, draped entirely in red, would greet one arrayed in a Cardinal's soutane.[54] De Guaita, returned his secretary Oswald Wirth, chose red to symbolize his *Rose-Croix;* and the prelate's garb was

simply a red dressing gown.[55] The Marquis, alleged Bois, indulged in astral traveling.° The Marquis, answered Wirth, never indulged in any practical magic at all. He remained strictly a philosopher. On one point Wirth was conspicuously silent, and the criticism of de Guaita pronounced; and it is here that the resemblance between Baudelaire and de Guaita becomes most marked. This point is the use of drugs.

De Guaita's friend, Victor-Emile Michelet, disapproved of drug-taking, while poetically admitting the existence of the "black charm" of the *poète maudit*. Baudelaire, he wrote, took opium and hashish; de Guaita, the "philosopher of the Fire," suited his more metaphysical temperament with morphine and cocaine.[57] Hashish was by no means unknown to him, however, and in an alphabetical list of "The Sorcerer's Armoury," the drug is given a lengthy entry.

> The smoking of *kif*, and above all the absorption of Hashish (taken pure . . . or mixed with date jam) produces a unique and supermundane intoxication, which by certain temperaments, that are mystic and sensual at the same time, is taken as a foretaste of the heavenly bliss of the Elect.[58]

He recommends the reading of Baudelaire's *Paradis artificiels*. Through hashish, he claims, "the Unconscious reveals itself to the spell-bound Consciousness, and the soul, beholding itself in its own mirror, displays its positive existence to itself." The drug restores for the taker the power of objective thought which man possessed before the Fall, but a warning is issued of the dangers of taking a dose in the wrong frame of mind. "Then the temptation of suicide is common; one is incited to take refuge from the fear of dying in death itself." Thus far the Marquis remains within a specifically literary tradition. The occultist is constrained to add a rider: "Hashish always encourages, and

°Astral traveling is the process by which some occultists claim to "get out of their physical bodies" and travel around in their "astral bodies."[56]

sometimes provokes spontaneously, *the projection of the astral* body."[59]

Jules Bois thought that Paul Adam, Laurent Tailhade, and Edouard Dubus were de Guaita's colleagues in his experiments in practical magic. Tailhade and Dubus are cited with Michelet by Oswald Wirth as de Guaita's earliest friends in the Quartier Latin.[60] Michelet was a poet in the Symbolist mold, and an occultist in a Theosophical tradition. Paul Adam, a member of the Council of the Rose-Croix, also had one foot in the Symbolist camp and another in that of the occultists. He is said to have had prophetic visions of the Great War, and was a great discoverer of the "hidden hand" in history.[61] Tailhade we have already met as a pugnacious duellist: violence and he were no strangers, and in 1894 he was to lose an eye in a bomb explosion in a café. Several years later he narrowly escaped immolation, when the house he was staying in was set on fire by an enraged band of Breton peasants whom Tailhade's political views had displeased.[62]

Of this group of Bohemians the most committed to de Guaita's form of occultism was Edouard Dubus, whose short career—he lived only from 1864 to 1895— might provide an epitome for that of the *poète maudit.* With early literary celebrity he coupled that fascination with the Abyss which was to prove the undoing of so many of his fellow-Artists. He was one of the founders of the *Mercure de France;* his poetry and his conversation were admired by Verlaine. His erratic political allegiances drove him from writing for Jerome Bonaparte's *Aigles impériales* to the columns of the *Cri du Peuple.* At first he worked as a lawyer. At the time of his death he occupied a post found for him by Huysmans in the Ministry of the Interior. But the life he led was the free life of Bohemia—a friend recalls how he and Dubus once played the prelude to *Parsifal* set for two hands on a café table.[63] The early Symbolist poetry of Dubus is contained in one slim volume, *Quand les violons sont partis* (1892), full of balls, roses, and agonies; in his posthumous poems Dubus can be seen moving ever nearer the Abyss of

Baudelaire and de Guaita. In direct homage to Baudelaire, one poem is called *Cavalier Spleen:*[64] another, entitled *Méditation,* is dedicated to de Guaita himself. Its subject is the isolated sage attempting the conquest of his soul, surrounded by "primal Abyss." Because, he says, the sage has not been able to give his sublime Will the wings which it needs to soar above the Abyss, the sneering void has reclaimed him. One day he will become a person whom everyone scorns, who might well die before having properly existed, borne down as he is by his odious humanity. It is time, Dubus exhorts his soul, to grow wings.[65] This exhortation seems to have come too late. Dubus became ensnared by de Guaita, on whom he had called one day to ask for information about the magician Apollonius of Tyana. His companion of the table-top duet calls de Guaita "a fanatical morphinomaniac," and accuses the Marquis of trying to make of his friends converts to his drug-taking. Several times the hapless Dubus went into hospital, only to resume his morphine addiction as soon as he emerged. Eventually he dropped dead in the street—one version says in a urinal, while trying to give himself a fix. His wife, actress Suzanne Gay, whose life must have been miserable enough as a result of her husband's homosexuality, was dragged along in the same hellish descent through occultism and morphine to death.[66]

The man responsible for these melacholy ends seems to have tempered his own indulgences with a stronger will. True, de Guaita himself died young, sightless, broken in body and mind.[67] He led externally a sinister life, sleeping by day and studying by night, only emerging from the red-hung apartment with its drugs and excellent cellar to hunt for books on the occult sciences.[68] He retained a certain respect for the Christian religion, and reminded his readers that "there is no middle way: one only withdraws from humanity to live with God—or Satan. . . ."[69] The warnings which he gives demonstrate that he was well aware of the dangers of the path he trod. Look down, he cries, from the precipice where we stand together—do you see those

flowers growing on the sides of the Abyss, whose beauty is so deadly and whose scent so disturbing? Beware. . . .[70] It seems doubtful whether de Guaita avoided the corruptions which he hoped to circumvent.

At the other end of the spectrum stood the aesthetic Sar. De Guaita was once told by the Symbolist poet Jean Moréas: "You are a Magus; but *I* am a sorcerer, which is *much* more decorative!"[71] More decorative still was Péladan, whose mysticism led him not through the Satanic path of suffering and physical sensation, but in pursuit of the Beautiful itself. It has been the fashion to give qualified praise to de Guaita as a scholarly metaphysician, and to denigrate Péladan as a poseur.[72] A closer study of the Sar shows not only that he introduced de Guaita to the occult, but that his own brand of mysticism was much more original than that of the Marquis. Both made their rebellion against rationalism and naturalism. But while de Guaita joined the more out-and-out rebels, Péladan laid his mysticism at the service of the Catholic reaction. This he did in his own inimitable fashion. He was not the first to have attempted a synthesis of Catholicism and the occult. But the fact that he attempted to *exotericize* occult symbolism—i.e., make it applicable to everyday life—has led to complete misunderstanding of his intentions.

In *Le vice suprême* Péladan had represented Mérodack as a superman overcoming his humanity. One defect of that Magus had been his over-literary cast of mind. "Books spoilt his life for him; the archaic form of his preoccupations shut him off from the modern world."[73] This could well have been said of de Guaita, as of many occultists. The Sar abandoned the jumble of beliefs which composed the faith of the majority of his fellow-Rosicrucians. Soon after he announced his break with de Guaita he began to issue a series of works laying down the law in the simplest terms for would-be Magi.

> LAW. Magic is the art of making use at short notice of normal human greed; and the Magus discovers that he possesses in-

asmuch as he no longer desires; in the sense that a desire is really dead only when it is absolutely destroyed.[74]

LAW. Magic consists in seeing and willing beyond the next horizon.[75]

In these terms Péladan sought to extract the essence from his particular occult traditions, and to make it morally applicable to his own day. For the woman, there were different rules than for the Magus. Her fulfilment was through her sensibility, whereas man's was through cerebration.[76] The Sar's dogmatism may appear absurd, but bearing in mind the extraordinary weight of intellectual baggage which we carry around today from the time and place of his flourishing, it is worth noting Péladan's social and political stance. He arraigned the powers that were before his Magian tribunal, and attacked them in series. First:

1. Examiners, considering that:
   . . .The University, based as it is on a single faculty, the memory, presents by far the greatest difficulties to the most remarkable and individualistic candidates; moreover, state instruction, with no philosophical basis, ought to perish—and may every one assist the process.
2. The whole army, considering that:
   . . .As cosmopolitanism is the only true form of civilization, it is for the individual the condition of collective security; the idea of the Nation, and the idea of passive obedience must be discredited as two barbaric survivals.[77]

It must be admitted that the Sar immediately began to fulminate against equality before the law. But if in this latter point his innate Romanticism and high Catholic principles declare him "reactionary," Péladan is otherwise "progressive" enough to have been thoroughly at home in, say, the Paris of 1968. Over all this "applied magic" was laid a gloss of Catholicism. After every dictum for the aspiring Magus or Fay, the Sar added a "Catholic Concordance"; and he prefaced each work with an offer to retract at once any statement offensive to the Holy See. This at-

titude Péladan retained consistently. In 1895, for example, he refused to write a preface for a book which he had promised to introduce, on the grounds that it was heresy. He would, he said, rather write a preface for Renan's *Life of Jesus*. "I have promised you an introduction, but not an apostasy."[78] He was a strange amalgam of the Catholic and the occultist, the Artist and the clown. And it would be giving a false value to his theories to pretend that he ever completely shook off the more eccentric ideas with which he had been brought up. He insisted on explaining Rabelais by Freemasonry, and was always full of posturing statements like: "The woman who lets herself be magnetized is—if she is a virgin—as if she has been deflowered; if she is married, she has committed adultery."[79] But his efforts to attain consistency were heroic. For example, in 1898 he visited the lands sacred to occult tradition—Egypt, Palestine, Greece, and (for him) Chaldea. In Palestine he discovered the *real* tomb of Jesus in the mosque of Omar;[80] and as if to make amends for this lapse, on his return wrote *L'Occulte catholique* to demonstrate once and for all that the occult and the Catholic were reconcilable.

The influence of Péladan was most marked in the field of the visual arts. After the War of the Two Roses, the Sar established his triple Order of the *Rose-Croix Catholique*, the Temple, and the Grail. His chief colleagues in this venture were Albert Jounet, Elémir Bourges, Count Antoine de la Rochefoucauld, and Count Léonce de Larmandie. Jounet had originally been a member of de Guaita's order; he was a Cabalist and a symbolist poet the nature of whose work can be adequately gathered from a single title like *Les lys noires*.[81] From writing books on the *Zohar* he became more and more Catholic, founded the *Fraternité de l'etoile*, a lay mystical order, and gradually drew away from Péladan.[82] His friend, Elémir Bourges, had undergone a phase of lavish dandyism like that of the Sar, favoring crimson waistcoats with hundreds of tiny buttons; but he had taken refuge from this too strenuous existence in a black pessimism and a chair in the Bibliothèque Nationale where

he "read everything."[83] De Larmandie (wrote Michelet) looked like a Newfoundland dog in search of a master.[84] A brilliant classical scholar, he had made a critical reputation with a book of verse published in 1877, and followed Péladan in producing a novel sequence—published by Chamuel, who was also responsible for issuing the Count's series of prose poems, these in "a trilogy of trilogies," symbolizing the soul's flight from the life of illusion and its passage through the Abyss to Heaven.[85] During the 1880s he had been active in politics; in 1898-9 had taken a leading part in the campaign to secure the revision of the Dreyfus trial. The First World War was to send de Larmandie to the mad-house with the shock of losing his three daughters: during his incarceration he underwent a schizoid experience which Michelet compares to that of the Nerval.[86] In 1896 he married his widowed niece to his aesthetic and occult superior; although precisely what was the order of precedence between a Count and a Sar remains obscure. At the famous *Salons de la Rose-Croix,* Paris was surprised to see the Count de Larmandie seemingly dressed as a commissionaire, taking the tickets.

These Salons represent Péladan's crowning achievement, and owed their existence largely to the efforts of Antoine de la Rochefoucauld, whom Péladan had "ensnared one day in the Librairie du Merveilleux."[87] De la Rochefoucauld withdrew his financial support during the course of the first of these manifestations in 1892. But his prestige as an artist attracted a group of eminent exhibitors which drew attention to the Rosicrucian theories of art. De la Rochefoucauld broke with Péladan over a difference in aesthetics, favoring more "progressive" styles. It is now believed that he possibly did not die until the 1960s, having spent the latter years of his life in a religious congregation.[88] During his brief association with the Order, de la Rochefoucauld held the post of Archonte of the Fine Arts, but the aesthetic of the *Rose-Croix* manifestations—which embodied musical and dramatic performances as well as the exhibitions of works of art—was entirely that of Péladan. The object of

the Aesthetic *Rose-Croix* was, it was announced, "to restore the cult of the IDEAL" through the depiction of Beauty and on the basis of Tradition. Catholic subjects were preferred before all others. In default of such works of art, allegories, Oriental religions, anything which could be described as "spiritual" would be accepted. As for architecture, this art had been killed in 1789, and therefore only designs for restoration or "projects for fairy-tale palaces" would be considered.[89] Anything remotely experimental, modernist, or materialist was anathema; as were everyday naturalist subjects—landscapes, seascapes, historical and patriotic paintings, still-lifes—however well executed. Péladan was in pursuit of an underlying "artistic spirit" which must inform the work of the true artist.

His early art criticism had declared that all great art was religious. "The artist should be a knight in armor, eagerly engaged in the symbolic quest for the Holy Grail, a crusader waging perpetual war on the Bourgeoisie!"[90] Now he came into the open, glorifying the sacred function of the Artist:

> Artist, you are a priest: Art is the great Mystery . . .
> Artist, you are king: Art is the true empire . . .
> Artist, you are Magus: Art is the great miracle . . .[91]

The reason for this is quite simple. Through Beauty one comes to God. "There is no reality other than God. There is no Truth other than God. There is no Beauty other than God."[92] It was therefore logical that Péladan should prefer works of art still informed by the Christian spirit: otherwise the Artist could fulfill his function through other forms of "spiritual" representation. At the Salons, which ran for five years, the presiding genii—who in the later stages could scarcely be persuaded to exhibit—were Gustave Moreau, Puvis de Chavannes, and Félicien Rops (who had designed a gruesome frontispiece for Péladan's *Le vice suprême*). Fernand Knopff and Georges Rouault also exhibited at the Salons. If the organization of an aesthetic movement under the banner of an occult society seems bizarre, and perhaps

even a little "French," it is as well to call to mind the origins of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, very similar to the Rosicrucians in inspiration and in its quasi-religious approach to art. The young men who in 1848 had formed themselves into a Brotherhood had even taken an oath not to divulge the meaning of the mysterious letters PRB[93]—a juvenile obsession with secret societies perhaps, but exactly in tone with the practice of such societies, where the Golden Dawn magical group is referred to as the GD, and even the Theosophical Society as the TS.

Not content with exhibiting "true art" to Paris in visual terms, Péladan instituted performances of works by "the superhuman" Wagner, his own mystical plays, and Rosicrucian fanfares by the composer Erik Satie. Satie was at this period the pianist first at the *Chat Noir* and then at other Montmartre cabarets. For over a year he was also the semi-official composer to the Rosicrucians, contributing music to Péladan's dramatic works and to the ceremonies of the Order. After 1892 Satie broke away from the Sar and began to pontificate in his own right. He formed the Metropolitan Church of Art of Jesus the Conductor, of which he was choir-master and Abbot. He fulminated against his musical and literary dislikes of his Church newspaper, and eventually joined forces with Jules Bois and his patron, the schismatic de la Rochefoucauld, in a group which published an esoteric-artistic review called *Le Coeur*. To a play of Bois, Satie contributed music as he had to those of Péladan.[94] In this musician religious inspiration and a taste for pseudo-religious mockery were easily combined. The Sar, on the other hand, banished all humorous subjects from his Salons.

From these artistic activities of Péladan, the *Rose-Croix* of de Guaita dissociated themselves completely, declaring the Sar a schismatic and an apostate.[95] Péladan continued to soldier on, battling with de Larmandie against the "scatological and coprophagous generation" which confronted them. In an age which saw "all philosophical and social formula give material assistance to the external

triumph of Prussia, and to the internal victory of excremental opportunism,"[96] their crusade was not so lonely as they believed. The Rosicrucian espisode is an integral part of that flight from reason which characterizes the 19th century. Like the other rebellions of Bohemia, the rebellion of Péladan was against bourgeois society, not merely because of what it had made of the world in material terms, but because it had ignored what seemed to be the fundamental questions of human existence. Neglect of this sort excluded established society from any serious consideration. The poets of the Abyss followed de Guaita as much as Baudelaire; the example of Péladan, the "Magus of Aestheticism,"[97] was that of Oscar Wilde. Occultism was sometimes cause, sometimes effect, of a state of mind, and it is not always possible to determine which. But it can be said at least that the response was the same for Artist as for occultist. The quest for Beauty and the passage through the Fire became the two roads for the Artist to tread. These were essentially *super*natural journeys. It is scarcely surprising if such total rejection of the world and its values expressed itself in semi-religious terms. And although *contemporary* occultism might not provide a direct influence on the men of the 1890s, the Traditions of occultism were a common source of inspiration for poet and occultist alike. It is this common source which provides the explanation for the similarity of their response to the general crisis. On the one hand, those who were primarily Artists expressed their occultism in their art, while those who were primarily occultists became known as eccentrics and magicians. Baudelaire, Gérard de Nerval, Mallarmé, Rimbaud—all derived elements of their philosophies of life and art from occult sources. Huysmans' fascination remained that of an outsider. The occult elements in the work of Alfred Jarry betrayed his susceptibility to theories in the Paris air.[98]

The story of Retté and his printer recalls that of another printer and publisher at whose bookshop men of letters met occultists. More likely than Chamuel to have been "Arcturus" was Edmond Bailly, who set up his business at the

sign of L'Art Indépendant about the same time as Chamuel opened his Librairie du Merveilleux. Here came artists (Felicien Rops, Toulouse-Lautrec, Odilon Redon); musicians (Satie, of course, with his great friend Debussy, who would arrive almost every day to play the piano in the shop and himself absorbed occult doctrines while studying Indian music with the Sufi Inayat Khan); men of letters (Mallarmé, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, and Huysmans); and the occultists, who predominated (Michelet, the astrologer Ely Star, Louis Ménard who translated the Hermetic writings and whose sole disciple had jumped out of the window). Together with his occult books, Bailly issued Symbolist poetry; and Victor-Emile Michelet recalls one night coming with Ely Star into the bookshop to find Villiers de l'Isle Adam holding court amongst a circle of poets and adepts.[99] Occult ideas were not merely in the air, floating high in a rarified atmosphere, or confined to some underground sewer. They permeated the very substance which Bohemia breathed. The Artists of Bohemia absorbed such ideas with the rest of their rebellious position; it would be remarkable if they had not. Péladan's Order did not survive the death of its founder in 1918; while de Guaita's was continued by Papus till his own death a year before the Sar's.[100] But the concepts which they had drawn from occult sources had a longer life in the production of poets and artists; most importantly in the idea of the Artist himself.

Was it possible that a fundamentally religious approach to art should not end with Art itself becoming a religion? "Art for Art's sake" did not mean the rejection of all values outside those of the work-in-progress. Precisely because of the spirit in which that work of art was approached, "Art for Art's sake" embodied a noble ideal. Of course, the implicitly "spiritual" interpretation of art became debased, and the doctrine misunderstood. But in its inception it was yet another instance of the search for a secure footing where all were slipping and sliding.

The position of the Artist, as hierophant of these new mysteries, consequently underwent some revaluation.

There could not be a religion of art without its priesthood. It was in the occult that the Artist found a definition of his own position. But it is useless to talk of the Artist's use of alchemical symbolism or Gnostic doctrine without some idea of what all this means—anyway, what was this ancient Rosicrucian society which the occultists claimed to have revived? Why this obsession with Chaldea and the East? What do the constant murmurings about a "Secret Tradition" signify? Even the redoutable Madame Blavatsky could pontificate about some Secret Doctrine, some Ancient Wisdom. Was there a Secret Tradition? Or were its upholders, as H.P.B. would have said, mere "flapdoodles"?

The answer is that there was. That the Paris occultists were not the only ones to draw upon its resources. That not only the idea of the Artist-priest, but the real nature of certain puzzling political developments cannot be understood without some knowledge of a factor basic in European history and as yet largely ignored—what, historically and philosophically, the "occult" is.

1. Joanny Bricaud, *J. K. Huysmans et le Satanisme* (Paris, 1913), pp. 17-22.
2. Richard Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution*, p. 131.
3. A heavily veiled "summary" of the contents of this document—now in the Vatican Library—is given by Bruno de Jesus-Marie in *Satan* (introduced by Moeller), pp. 263-4. This includes "a judgment of eternal perdition" against anyone who might presume to take action against Boullan or Adèle Chevalier because of "the event of the 8th of December." It is fairly safe to assume that this was the murder referred to by Griffiths, and that Boullan remained unrepentant, as he may well have been able to justify his actions in terms of his private theology.
4. Griffiths, *Reactionary Revolution*, pp. 131-2.
5. Griffiths, *Reactionary Revolution*, pp. 132-3.
6. Bricaud, *Huysmans*, pp. 26-8.
7. Bricaud, *Huysmans*, pp. 28-9.
8. Oswald Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita* (Paris, 1935), pp. 101-2. Boullan was condemned for misuse of Cabalistic rites. This is

significant in view of the revival of Cabalistic studies at this time; see Chapters 6 and 7 below.

9. Griffiths, *Reactionary Revolution*, p. 134.
10. Bricaud, *Huysmans*, p. 40.
11. Bricaud, *Huysmans*, pp. 35-6.
12. See Griffiths, *Reactionary Revolution*, pp. 135-6, for letter describing a rite directed against Péladan—who had in fact by this time broken with de Guaita (see below).
13. Bricaud, *Huysmans*, pp. 37-9; Griffiths, *Reactionary Revolution*, p. 136.
14. Victor-Emile Michelet, *Les compagnons de la hiérophanie* (Paris, n.d.), pp. 24-5. Michelet's account is invaluable as a source for the Occult revival in 19th-century France; a short analysis written in his old age by one of the most clear-headed participants in the movement. Although occasionally forgetful in points of detail, Michelet performs a great service by placing the movement in its proper setting.
15. Jules Bois, *Le satanisme et la magie* (Paris, 1895), pp. 241 ff. A résumé is given of the conjurations of Napoleon III.
16. Bricaud, *Huysmans*, pp. 48-50.
17. Michelet, *Les compagnons*, p. 27.
18. Michelet, *Les compagnons*, pp. 29-30; for Tailhade see below, also his *Quelque fantômes de jadis* (Paris, 1920), and entry in the *Dictionaire des Contemporains*, vol. VI, pp. 257-8.
19. See sworn deposition of Bois' second, the novelist and journalist Paul Foucher—nephew of Victor Hugo—in Jules Bois, *Le monde invisible* (Paris, 1902), pp. 409-10.
20. Phillippe Encausse, *Papus, sa vie, son oeuvre* (Paris, 1932), pp. 17-18. For this duel, writes his son, Papus' mother bought him a shirt thick enough to be called armor.
21. Adolphe Retté, *Le symbolisme* (Paris, 1903), pp. 24-7.
22. Gustave Kahn, *Symbolistes et décadents* (Paris, 1902), p. 57.
23. Bois, *Le satanisme*, pp. 315-17.
24. Bois, *Les petites religions de Paris* (Paris, 1894), pp. 10-18.
25. Joanny Bricaud, *Huysmans, occultiste et magician* (Paris, 1913), pp. 8-9.
26. Encausse, *Papus*, p. 53.
27. V.-E. Michelet, *Figures d'évocateurs* (Paris, 1913), pp. 26-7.

28. For a discussion of the aesthetics of Evil, see Marcel A. Ruff, *L'esprit du mal et l'ésthetique baudelairienne* (Paris, 1955).

29. Comte de Lautréamont, *Maldoror*, tr. by Guy Wertham of *Les Chants de Maldoror* (New York, 1965), p. 15.

30. Kahn, *Symbolistes*, pp. 37-8.

31. Michelet, *Les compagnons*, pp. 17-18. Cf. Oswald Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita*, p. 23, where he says that de Guaita had been directed to the writings of Eliphas Lévi by Catulle Mendès in 1882-3: there is, however, little doubt that Péladan was the crucial influence in turning de Guaita to occultism.

32. Michelet, *Les compagnons*, pp. 21-32.

33. Kahn, *Symbolistes*, p. 40.

34. Henri Mazel, *Au beau temps du symbolisme* (Paris), pp. 186-7.

35. Réné-Georges Aubrun, *Péladan* (Paris, 1904), pp. 7-8. *Nouvelle Revue du Midi* (Nimes) for December, 1924: special number, "Joséphin Péladan," pp. 214-5.

36. Mazel, *Au beau temps*, pp. 187-8.

37. *Nouvelle Revue du Midi*, "Péladan," pp. 227-30.

38. Aubrun, *Péladan*, pp. 8-9.

39. Joséphin Péladan, *L'art ochloracratique, salons de 1882 et 1883* (Paris, 1888), p. 16. This title has been translated "mod art."

40. Péladan, *L'art ochloracratique*, p. 213.

41. Péladan, *Le vice suprême*, p. 121.

42. Péladan, *Le vice suprême*, p. 125. Cf. the doctrines of Thomas Lake Harris and Laurence Oliphant; see in particular Oliphant's *Sympneumata*.

43. Péladan, *Le vice suprême*, p. 243.

44. *Nouvelle Revue du Midi* "Pélandan," pp. 224-6. For the "original" Rosicrucian Brotherhood and the development of occult Masonry, see Chapter 5 below. Adrien Péladan had been initiated by one Simon Brugul in Toulouse in 1858.

45. Stanislas de Guaita, *Essais de sciences maudits*, vol. I, *Au seuil du mystère* (Paris, 1890), pp. 158-61.

46. Michelet, *Les compagnons*, p. 24. The other Council members were A. Gabriol and H. Thoriau. One of the original Council was eventually replaced by a woman. For Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, see below, Chapter 7.

47. Oswald Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita*, p. 111.

48. Verlaine wrote:

Richepin, Péladan et Catulle Mendès
Me paraissent pour le cheveu recommandés.

49. Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita,* pp. 186-7.

50. Jules Bois, *Le monde invisible,* p. 19.

51. The text of these *Acta Syncelli* printed by Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita,* pp. 247-56.

52. Text printed by Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita,* pp. 114-18; cf. Michelet, *Les compagnons,* pp. 51-2.

53. Michelet, *Figures d'evocateurs,* p. 63; see also Bois, *Le monde invisible,* pp. 23-4.

54. Bois, *Le monde invisible,* p. 23.

55. Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita,* p. 150.

56. On the astral plane, wrote de Guaita, "La sorcellerie deploie tous les délires de sa furibonde ivresse, tout le luxe de son infamie arrogante, toutes les pompes de son criminel neant." (*Essais de science maudits,* vol. II, *Le serpent de la Genèse,* premiere septaine, *Le temple de Satan*—Paris, 1891, p. 234.) For the supposed mechanism of "astral projection," see the works of Oliver Fox and Robert Crookall. For the ways in which occultists of a type not dissimilar to the Paris groups have used the idea of astral travelling, see Dion Fortune, *Psychic Self-Defence* (London, 1930), and the chapter in Francis King's *Ritual Magic in England* entitled "Dr. Felkin's Astral Junkies."

57. Michelet, *Figures d'évocateurs,* pp. 62-3.

58. Stanislas de Guaita, *Le temple de Satan,* p. 361.

59. De Guaita, *Le temple de Satan,* pp. 361-2 and note, p. 362.

60. Bois, *Le monde invisible,* p. 26; Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita,* p. 22.

61. Michelet, *Les Compagnons,* pp. 43-8.

62. See note 24 above; further, Fernand Kolney, *Laurent Tailhade, son oeuvre* (Paris, 1922).

63. Adolphe Retté, *Le symbolisme,* pp. 56-7.

64. Edouard Dubus, *Quand les violons sont partis, et vers posthumes* (Paris, 1895), p. 113.

Le Cavalier Spleen a pour monture
Une âme à plaisir, il la torture . . .

65. Dubus, *Quand les violons . . .,* pp. 84-5.

66. Retté, *Le symbolisme,* p. 58; Bois, *Le monde invisible,* p. 26. (The urinal story is, of course, that of Bois) Cf. Griffiths, *Reactionary Revolution,* p. 137.

67. Bois, *Le monde invisible,* p. 23.

68. Michelet, *Les compagnons*, p. 24.

69. De Guaita, *Le serpent de la Genèse*, seconde septaine, *La Clef de la magie noire*, p. 180. Cf. *Le temple de Satan*, p. 28.

70. De Guaita, *Le temple de Satan*, p. 501.

71. De Guaita, *Le temple de Satan*, p. 502, note 2.

72. Griffiths, *Reactionary Revolution*, p. 137, calls the Sar "unintelligent and odd." Odd he certainly was, but the method in his madness was more than that of many of his contemporaries.

73. Péladan, *Le vice suprème*, p. 121.

74. Péladan, *Comment on devient mage* (Paris, 1892), p. 91.

75. Péladan, *Comment on devient mage*, p. 92.

76. Péladan, *Comment on devient fée* (Paris, 1893), p. 181.

77. Péladan, *Comment on devient fée*, p. 268.

78. Ray Nyst, *Un prophète; rétorsion liminaire au Sar Joseph Péladan* (Paris, 1895), p. 4.

79. Péladan, *Comment on devient fée*, p. 283.

80. Aubrun, *Péladan*, p. 27.

81. Michelet, *Les compagnons*, pp. 88-9; cf. Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita*, p. 27. On page 90, Michelet quotes a specimen of Jounet's lugubrious verse:

Profonds lys ténébreux, vous êtes le symbole
De la kabbale sainte et de mon triste coeur . . .

82. Bois, *Le monde invisible*, pp. 20-21.

83. Michelet, *Les compagnons*, pp. 52-3.

84. Michelet, *Les compagnons*, p. 54.

85. First trilogy—*La chevanchée de la chimère*
Second trilogy—*La course à l'abime.*
Third trilogy—*La montée du ciel.*

86. Michelet, *Les compagnons*, pp. 53-4.

87. Michelet, *Les compagnons*, pp. 55-6.

88. Entry in Robert Pincus-Whitten, *Les Salons de la Rose-Croix, 1892-7*, catalogue of exhibition at the Piccadilly Gallery (London, 1968).

89. Pincus-Whitten, translation of Rules of the Salon de la Rose-Croix, from Péladan's *Salon de la Rose-Croix* (Paris, 1891), of which I have not been able to obtain a copy.

90. Péladan, *L'art ochlorocratique*, p. 213.

91. Péladan, *L'art idéaliste et mystique, doctrine de l'ordre et du Salon des Rose-Croix* (2nd edition, Paris, 1894), pp. 17-18.

92. Péladan, *L'art idéaliste*, p. 33.

93. William Gaunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy* (London, paperback edition, 1965), p. 24.

94. Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years* (London, paperback edition, 1969), pp. 117-24; P.-D. Templier, *Erik Satie* (tr. E. L. and D. S. French, Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1969), pp. 13-20.

95. See declaration printed in Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita,* pp. 121-2.

96. De Larmandie, *Eoraka, notes sur l'ésoterisme* (Paris, 1891), p. 5.

97. Antoine Orléac, "Péladan et le symbolisme esoterique" in *Les cahiers d'Hermès,* ed. A. Rolland de Reneville (Paris, 1947), no. 1, p. 225.

98. See also John Senior, *The Way Down and Out, the occult in Symbolist literature* (New York, 1959); and A. Rolland de Reneville, "Sciences maudites et poètes maudits", in *Cahiers d'Hermès,* no. 1.

99. Michelet, *Les compagnons,* pp. 65-78.

100. Fr. Wittemans, *A New and Authentic History of the Rosicrucians* (London and Chicago, 1939), pp. 149-50. After de Guaita's death, first "Barlet" succeeded him, then Papus.

Chapter 6
Secret Traditions

THE occult is *rejected knowledge*. It may be knowledge which is actively rejected by an Establishment culture, or knowledge which voluntarily exiles itself from the courts of favor because of its recognized incompatibility with the prevailing wisdom. The world "occult" means "hidden," and in this idea lies the key to the occult's forbidding appearance. Something may be hidden because of its immense value, or reverently concealed from the prying eyes of the profane. But this

hidden thing may also have achieved its sequestered position because the Powers That Be have found it wanting. Either it is a threat and must be buried, or simply useless, and so forgotten. Thus, if a newcomer to the vast quantity of occult literature begins browsing at random, puzzlement and impatience will soon be his lot; for he will find jumbled together the droppings of all cultures, and occasional fragments of philosophy perhaps profound but almost certainly subversive to right living in the society in which he finds himself.

The occult is rejected knowledge: that is, an Underground whose basic unity is that of Opposition to an Establishment of Powers That Are. It is the extraordinary quality of European history to have produced an Establishment position that has held consistent over a long period, and yet allowed the constant replenishing of the forces of subversion.[1] From the end of the 4th century A.D. the Christian religion became the official religion of both Eastern and Western Empires, and its rapid conquest of Europe imposed an order of society and an ordered way of thought which were inseparable. It is only in the past four centuries that this Establishment has gradually been worn away—not, it must hastily be admitted, by the opposition of the occult, which remains largely rejected,[2] but by the triumph of forces originating within that Establishment itself. In opposition to this Establishment, it would be unnatural not to find some similarity among occult theories. But there is often a little more to explain the common ground of occultists than the unity of opposition. This stems from their adherence to a world-view which has, through historical accident, remained rejected throughout the known history of Western Europe. It is this world-view—diverse in its manifestations, yet united in some few basic assumptions—that is known as the Tradition, the Secret Doctrine, the Ancient Wisdom, and by a dozen other names. No two interpretations of this Secret Tradition are ever the same, because of the number of theories which

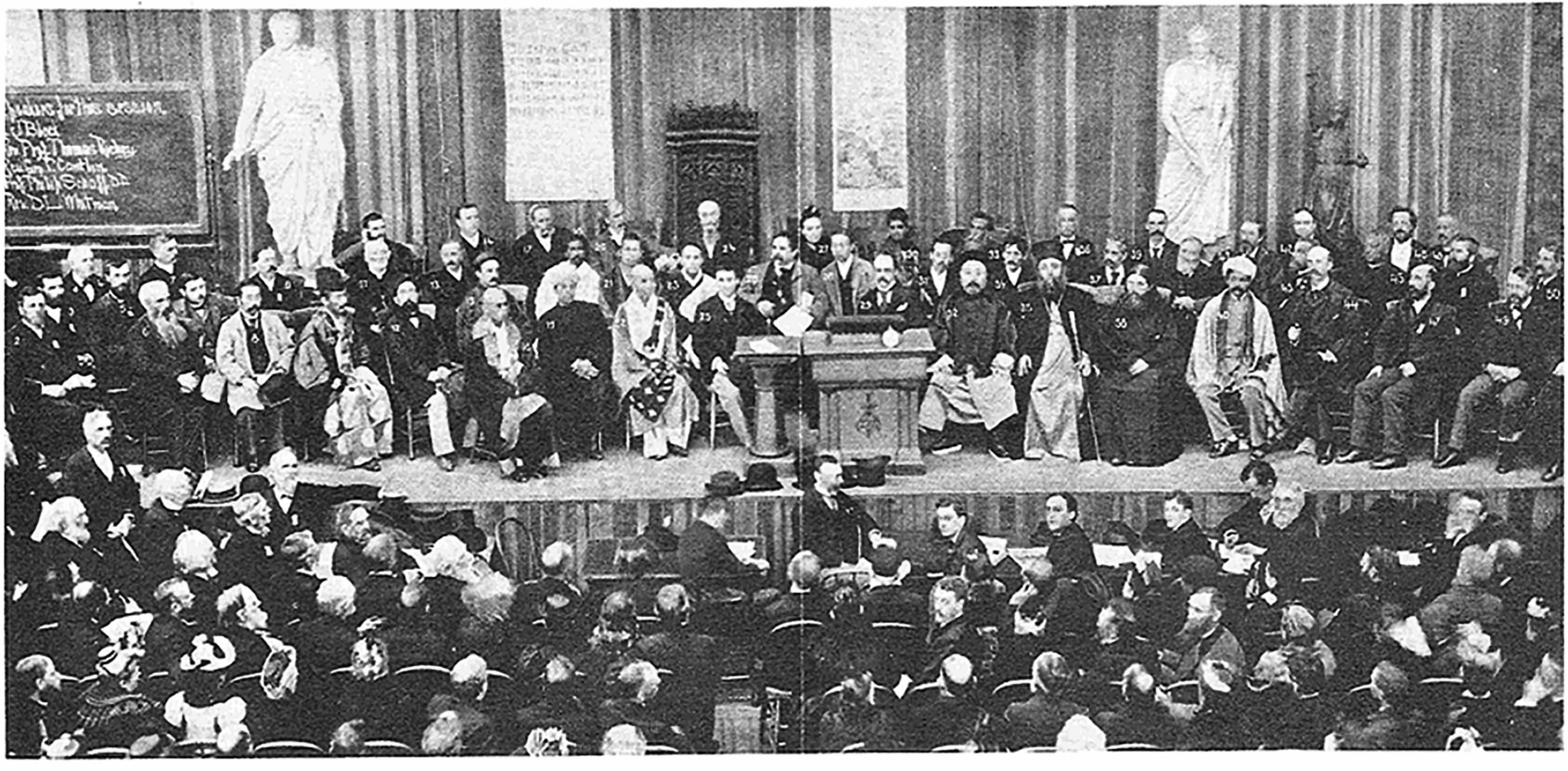
SIR GEORGE SITWELL'S EXPOSURE OF FLORENCE COOK IN 1880

" . . . *a fraudulent medium and sexually rapacious* . . . "

ANDREW JACKSON DAVIS
" . . . his bad trip resulted from the fear of hell-fire . . . "

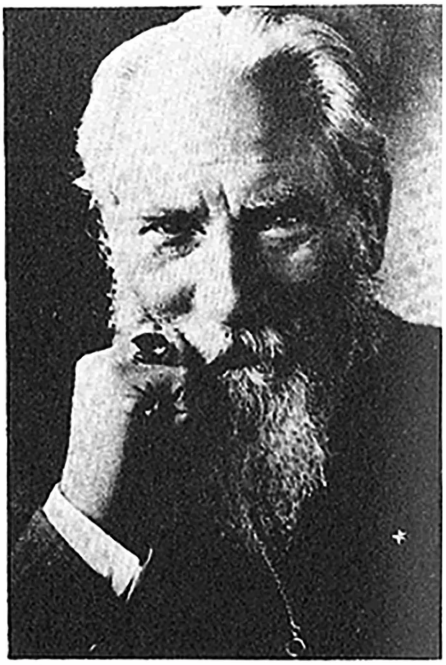
DANIEL DUNGLAS HOME
" . . . was observed to float out of a third-floor window . . . "

THE SISTERS KATE AND MARGARET FOX
" . . . if they could not move their knee-joints, the phenomena ceased . . . "



THE WORLD'S PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS,
CHICAGO 1893
" . . . proposing to redraw the spiritual map of the world . . . "

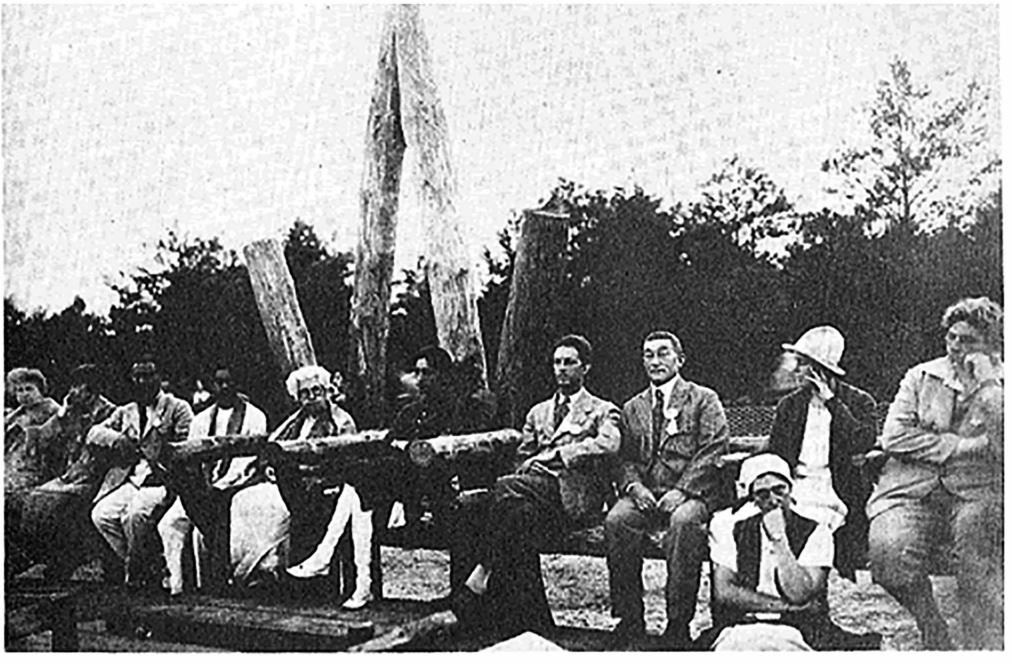
ANNIE BESANT
" . . . from the arena of social reform rather than the jungles of Hindustan . . . "



C. W. LEADBEATER
" . . . that type of mildly homosexual clergyman . . . "

H. P. B. IN HER BATH-CHAIR AT AVENUE ROAD, 1890.

H. P. BLAVATSKY
" . . . had led an intriguing and perhaps scandalous life . . . "



KRISHNAMURTI AND MRS. BESANT AT A MEETING OF THE ORDER OF THE STAR IN THE EAST
" . . . *launched amid scenes of intense emotion* . . . "

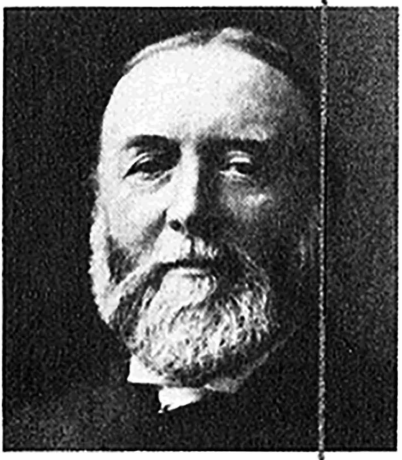
RIGHT: EUGÈNE VINTRAS
" . . . *predicted a 'terrible explosion' as 'the signal of Hell'* . . . "

THE ABBÉ BOULLAN
" . . . *condemned to death by the fluids* . . . "

WILLIAM SHARP
" . . . became Fiona by degrees . . . "

W. B. YEATS
" . . . projected a Castle of Heroes on an island . . . "

ANNA KINGSFORD
" . . . I will kill Louis Pasteur . . . "



THOMAS DAVIDSON
" . . . a visionary of apocalyptic bent . . . "

GEORGE (A. E.) RUSSELL
" . . . lingered too long in the territory of the nature-spirits . . . "

have accrued throughout the centuries of opposition underground. But it is nevertheless possible to hunt it to its origins; and by following the trail left by the heroes of the occultists, to determine roughly what has been the progress of this Tradition, and discover something of its nature.

In the first two centuries of the Christian era, which saw the emergence of Christianity as the dominant religion in both Eastern and Western parts of the Empire, the starveling cult had to contend with ferocious competition. The period was one of great spiritual turmoil. Sect vied with sect, and the once highly-admired philosophical structures of Greek rationalism yielded pride of place, even among the intelligentsia, to theories about the universe in which magic, astrology, and ecstatic experience played important parts. This gradual erosion of what most scholars have seen as the chief glory of Hellenic culture had begun much earlier. E. R. Dodds notes that in the 5th century B.C. there was a vast gulf between the rationalism of the Greek intellectuals and the body of popular beliefs; but that although the 3rd century B.C. seemed poised to admit the triumph of rationalism, soon afterwards the cults of the irrational began to make headway. This resulted in a levelling up and down, and in the emergence of thousands of syncretist theories about the universe from the combination of rationalist philosophy with the new "magical" attitudes. It is significant that the cause advanced for this early "flight from reason" is exactly the same as the argument put forward in this book for a later period—that the consequences of too much reason were so unbearable, and that a refuge was sought in more hopeful interpretations of the universe. "Better the rigid determinism of the astrological Fate than that terrifying burden of daily responsibility."[3]

It is in this body of metaphysical speculation and visionary experience that the roots of the Secret Traditions are to be found. For various elements which compose this world-view we must turn to the religious thought of the period, and in particular to developments which are known

as Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, Hermetism, and the Mystery religions. Of these, the Mysteries are by far the most remote in origin.

Precisely what was the first form of the Mystery cults must remain a matter of dispute. One theory is that they originated in the primitive secret societies of agrarian cultures;[4] but this seems as lacking in proof as any other. At any rate, this hypothesis emphasizes one cardinal characteristic of secrecy. Another is illustrated by the cult of Dionysos, or Bacchus, which probably swept the Mediterranean at the end of the 8th century, bringing "wild ecstasy, dark terror, the ideas of guilt and atonement, condemnation and election . . . un-Greek and anti-Greek."[5] Dionysos gave release from the self: the aim of his cult was *ecstasis*, ecstasy, which might either mean a temporary taking one out of oneself, or a complete change of personality. This was the secret of his appeal. In devotion to the god the burden of personal responsibility was relieved. The Self was altered by the divine.[6] The religion of Dionysos influenced later Mysteries: the Orphic rites, supposedly instituted by Orpheus, and based on the twenty-four books of sacred hymns, or the famous Mysteries of Eleusis, where the rites of Demeter and Kore (Persephone) were celebrated. The Orphic hymns, as they have passed down to later generations interested in the Mysteries, are invocations: that is, they implore the god or Power invoked to come and bless his worshippers—presumably with the ecstatic effects associated with him.[7] Exactly what went on during the Eleusinian Mysteries is a favorite subject for scholarly mystification. In the last analysis it is more what *has been made* of the Mysteries that matters, than what actually occurred. At Eleusis, however, the climax of the ceremonies seems to have been some sort of ecstatic vision; and it seems possible that the goal desired was a union with the gods—which is again a form of ecstasy in which the devotee loses all sense of his normal self.[8]

Such forms of devotion continued to exist alongside the rationalist achievements of the Greek philosophers; and in

the period of the rationalists' declining influence, Mysteries gained numerous converts. New cults were established, like that of Serapis, founded about 300 B.C. in Alexandria by the first Ptolemy. The Mysteries of Serapis absorbed almost every religious and pseudo-religious attitude of the day. Ptolemy called in as adviser a priest from Eleusis. The cult dealt in inspired dreams, prophecies, miraculous cures, and spiritual absolutions; and its temple was sited according to astrological principles. To Serapis the Roman Emperor Caracalla dedicated the sword with which he had killed his brother Geta in his mother's arms.[9] Under Rome, however, the increasing devotion to the Mysteries was in particular to one cult, which owed nothing to the Greek form of such religions. This was the religion of Mithras, the Bull-Slayer, which derived originally from Persia, and had adapted itself to the exigencies of life in the Empire. The Roman Mithras is very different from the Persian Mithra of the Zend-Avesta, and seems to have represented a type of Persian paganism condemned by the pure Zoroastrians of that country.[10] Like the cult of Serapis, the god collected in his travels a selection of "magical" beliefs. From the Chaldean Magi astrology was borrowed, and from the remnants of Greek philosophy a whole theology was devised to unite the different elements in Mithras's cult. The Emperor Commodus (A.D. 180-92) was initiated into the Mysteries; and from this period onwards, continuing favor was shown to the cult by the imperial house.[11] Mithras made many converts, but principally in the army, for his religion was that of a soldier.

The ritual of Mithras involved the devotee passing through seven grades, or degrees of initiation. These were Raven, Occult, Soldier, Lion, Persian, Runner of the Sun, and Father. They corresponded to the seven spheres through which it was believed that the soul of man had to pass to reach the home of the blessed. Only the last four degrees permitted a man to engage in the full ceremonies of the cult. The trials which the candidate for a higher degree had to undergo were unpleasant in the extreme. Blind-

folded, with hands tied with chickens' entrails, he would be forced to jump a ditch of water—or made to watch a simulated murder.[12] The theology of the creed was complex: it had to be in order to reconcile the many conflicting elements absorbed in its passage to the West. This theology bears many resemblances to other systems of the period, and is a useful indication of the sort of influences which were acting on Greek philosophy to produce semi-magical systems of speculation. At the head of the divine hierarchy was Aeon, Chronos, Infinite Time, from whom everything had sprung in a series of generations: Heaven and Earth beget Ocean, Ocean begets . . . etc. Fire, water, and earth were deified; and everything on earth was seen as having its reflection in the heavens. Thus the raven, the dog, and the lion with which Mithras was usually portrayed, were identified with the constellations which bore their names and the influence of the stars was exerted on every body on earth.[13] Each element of everyday experience was in a way sacred to the initiate, because it was tied in some theological fashion to the central mysteries of his faith. "The stars that shone in the sky, the wind that whispered in the foliage, the spring or brook that babbled down the mountain-side, even the earth that he trod under his feet, were in his eyes divine . . ."[14]

Divinity was troubling: it was various and many-formed. The philosophers abandoned the caution of their predecessors. Another source from which occultists have drawn their Secret Tradition is the school of speculation called Neo-Platonism. It has been argued that the seeds of Neo-Platonic doctrine were sown by Plato himself; but it is equally possible that the originators were his first-generation pupils in the Academy of Athens. Even the "magico-religious" complexion of Neo-Platonism seems to have sprung from the Academy, where there was an interest in demonology and occult phenomena.[15] It was anyway a rapid growth, which found its crowning expression in the teachings of Plotinus (born A.D. 240/5), who studied at Alexandria before joining the expedition of Gordian against

Persia in order to learn Eastern doctrine at first hand. At the age of forty he established himself as a teacher of philosophy in Rome, where after his death in the year 270 his teachings were continued by Porphyry and Iamblichus. Iamblichus returned to his native Syria, where he died c. 330; and on his departure from Rome the Neo-Platonic school seems to have broken up, to reappear in various centers in the East.[16]

Some characteristics of Neo-Platonic thought seem like a more intellectualized version of the theology of the Mithras-cult. There were said to be very many spheres of being, ranging from the highest, to the lowest, which was the sphere of being as man perceives it—that is, his normal picture of what his life is all about. The highest sphere of being was derived from a supreme principle called the One—nothing at all could be said about it, as this would be to limit what could not be limited. As the spheres of being became more distant from the One, the sorts of being in each sphere became more numerous and more limited. The most densely occupied and most limited sphere of being was the lowest sphere, that of ordinary perceptible existence.[17] This progression from the perfect One to the horribly limited Many could be expressed in terms of the descent of the soul into matter: the Gnostics were to take similar ideas and call all matter evil as a result.

Together with this system of the metaphysical universe, some Neo-Platonists combined belief in a magical system of "sympathies" or "correspondences"—like the Mithraic belief that everything on earth had its corresponding constellation. In certain hands this principle of correspondences—which runs through all occult thought—was extended to include jewels, plants, almost everything under the sun. Thus, in Roman astrological theory, Libra governed the buttocks, Scorpio the genitals, and Capricorn the knees.[18] Each astrological sign would have its corresponding jewel; each jewel might also govern the same part of the body. This attitude was expressed by Plotinus in philosophical and religious terms:

How are enchantments produced? By community of feeling, through the natural concord of like principles and contrariety of unlike, and through the variety of the many powers which go to make up the one world-animal.

In a like manner, prayer attains its effect by a community of feeling betwixt certain parts of the universe . . . [19]

It is possible to see in this reaching for cause and effect the effort of speculation which would one day lead to "scientific thought." But the problems to which it was applied were those of life and death, destiny and the soul. Precisely what attributes to give to each constellation, plant, etc., must largely have been the affair of the individual magus. It is this idea of unseen correspondences which is at the foundation of every occult view of the universe. It is most obvious in its most debased form, such as attempts like that of the Abbé Boullan to work cures with precious stones. The expression given to this viewpoint by the Neo-Platonist philosophers was, on the other hand, extremely sophisticated, and of great subtlety.

Less abstracted are the collection of miscellaneous teachings gathered together under the term *Hermetica.* They display very many of the same attitudes as the Neo-Platonist philosophers. Supposedly scripture revealed by the god Hermes, or his Egyptian equivalent, Thoth, the modern editor of these writings insists that the Hermetic position has little to distinguish it from that of many other systems of the same era going under the names of other prophets.[20] In the history of the Secret Traditions the *Hermetica* became important because of the great value placed on them in Renaissance Europe; in their context they are significant because they typify this magical attitude to life. The fact that Hermes is taken here as the founder of astrology, alchemy, and magic, the revealer of occult correspondences, is useful to emphasize that European attempts at practicing astrology, alchemy, or magic, often called the "Hermetic sciences," have their origins in the same period of religious ferment as saw the flourishing of the Mysteries and the birth of Neo-Platonism. There

were many magical and alchemical papyri circulating in Graeco-Egyptian Egypt which owed no allegiance to "Hermes." Similarly, the philosophical position of the *Hermetica*, with its doctrine that matter is evil and to be escaped, can be paralleled by the Gnostics.

"Gnosis" means knowledge. The Gnostic religion was based on the possession of this knowledge: knowledge of God and things divine, either through direct mystical experience, or through the possession of a secret body of doctrine which had been handed down to the initiates.

Like almost all the questions of early religious history, that of the origin of the various Gnostic systems is a matter of debate. The early Fathers of the Christian Church, who saw in Gnosticism their chief competition, considered the rival doctrines to be the result of distortion of Christian belief. But it seems also as if there was a form of pagan Greek Gnosticism and a pre-Christian Jewish Gnosticism as well.[21] The Gnostic position was attacked by Plotinus and his followers as well as by the Christians; for the Gnosis appeared to be blasphemy to a right-thinking Neo-Platonist as much as to a Christian Father. While adopting the concept of several successive spheres of being, the Gnostics asserted that the cosmic ordering was in effect diabolical, that the world of matter in which the human soul was imprisoned was the work of an evil Demiurge, and that the true home of the spirit was outside the whole system, partaking in its own divine nature of the Great Life beyond. The Gnosis, the knowledge which ensures salvation, is the realization by man that he contains a spark of God, and of the necessity of awakening from the half-life he leads on earth—described variously as "numbness," "sleep," or "intoxication"—to a full consciousness of his divinity and of how it has been ensnared in matter.[22] This awakening can lead to several reactions. In any case, the Gnostic is one of the elect.

But the knowledge of his position may at first terrify him.[23] It is notable in view of our concern with the late 19th century that the use in the 1890s of the term the "Abyss" is

exactly that used by the Gnostic Valentinus to describe the awful unknowableness of God.[24] But once he has accepted the Gnosis, the believer has a basic choice to make as to how he shall conduct himself in the wicked world. He may choose the road of asceticism, thus denying himself all but minimal contact with the things of this world. Or he may decide that as his divine nature is anyway imperishable, it really does not matter how he conducts himself on earth. There is a further variation on this theme of the moral freedom of the Gnostic. He may decide that he is actually *obliged* to defy convention; either as a defiance of all laws governing the world of matter, or as a deliberate attempt to do everything and so exhaust the natural world of its powers.[25] The relevance of this attitude to the position of the *poète maudit* of the 19th century is obvious. To rebels of all kinds the theology and code of conduct is appealing.

Thus, during the centuries when Christianity was fighting for its life, it was as one of many religions in a period of intense religious activity. The extent of its victory was, because of this, remarkable. The year 312 is the supposed date of the conversion to Christianity of the Emperor Constantine. Practical results were seen in 318 and 320 with decrees prohibiting magic and private auguries; after 330 Neo-Platonism was also condemned. It was not until the end of the century, however, that the Christian religion securely established its position. In 382 Gratian, the Western Emperor, contrived effectively to divorce the imperial office from the old pagan state religion by abandoning the various symbols and the title of "pontifex maximus." In the Eastern Empire the year 392 saw the final proscription of all non-Christian religions by Theodosius; an edict rendered effectual in the West as well two years later, when its promulgator invaded Italy and defeated the usurper Eugenius who had compromised with a pagan reaction. After the time of Theodosius, the Christian religion was the only creed permitted in Eastern and Western Empires alike.[26]

What happened to the defeated religions, to their flourishing beliefs, to their often elaborate systems of speculation? They were exterminated with a thoroughness which is almost unbelievable, until the political and social uses of a state religion are brought to mind. The Mysteries fell under the general ban. Those of Mithras were the most tenacious. Julian the Apostate reinstated the cult on his accession in 361; but soon legislation was introduced against this former recipient of imperial patronage. In 371 a number of devotees of the Mysteries were implicated in a plot and executed. Nevertheless, Mithraism probably continued to exist as late as the 5th century in remote corners of the Alps and the Vosges before finally surrendering its life. Some of its sacred practices seem to have found their way into orthodox Christianity, but as a cult the religion of the Bull-Slayer was dead.[27] Neo-Platonism also survived in the 5th century amongst the cultured minority who saw in its teachings the last glimmerings of the admired Greek tradition of philosophy. In 415, Hypatia, the head of the Neo-Platonic school in Alexandria, was murdered by Christian monks: fittingly, the last stronghold of this tradition of thought was Athens, where it had come to dominate the old Academy. The career of Proclus (410-85) marks the high point of Neo-Platonism's stand against Christianity, but the last of this line, Damascius, travelled with his brother-philosophers into the East, searching for a kingdom where the new religion could not reach them, leaving behind a Christian Empire which they saw as "a fabulous and formless darkness mastering the loveliness of the world."[28]

Gnosticism did not survive as organized opposition to Christianity: but Gnostic tenets were to prove among the hardest to eradicate from the ranks of heresy. Similarly, the mass of magical and debased Neo-Platonic literature like the *Hermetica* could be excluded from the sphere of influence of the Christian Church, but not destroyed. Among the Arabs such traditions of thought lingered on, and were gradually re-introduced into Europe.

It is with European Christianity that we shall be concerned, because it swiftly became the one and only interpretation of man or gods throughout the continent. The successful struggle of the Pope of Rome to establish the authority of the Holy See as the sole arbitrator of men's consciences and, indeed, of their worldly actions effectively sealed off Western Christendom from the outside world. The complete dominance of Christianity was reinforced by the geographical accident which kept the remains of rival traditions of thought in Africa or in the East.

Before the fate of the "Secret Traditions" in medieval Europe is discussed, it is worth considering further some elements common to various systems which Christianity displaced. Certain widely-held beliefs have already been pointed out—the idea of a succession of spheres of being in Gnosticism, Neo-Platonism, and more primitively, in the Mithraic Mysteries—the belief in the evilness of matter in Gnosticism and the *Hermetica*—the view of creation which has been called *magical,* and involving theories of secret correspondences between objects which would normally appear to have no connection. There exist also certain similarities of approach to the problems of existence. The first is a common tendency to *syncretism*—that is, an attempt to combine the multiplicity of available doctrines into one consistent whole. The second is a belief in *experience* as a means of salvation or a proof of being on the right road. Thus, in the Mysteries, ecstasy was the goal; or perhaps, as in those of Mithras, a gradual opening of the mind to the possibilities of life by a series of carefully planned instructions and "initiations." Both the Gnostics and the Neo-Platonists placed emphasis on mystical experience as a means of knowing God. To the Gnostics this might appear as a ray of divine light striking into their prison.[29] The Neo-Platonist might express his sensations as a vision of the One, the divine. In debased Neo-Platonism and much of the *Hermetica* there is a recourse to practical magic; for example, Nigidius Figulus, who wrote on dreams and quoted the Chaldean Magi, also had a reputation as a practicing occultist, and discovered a hidden treasure by

the use of a medium.[30] The practical intervention of the miraculous in everyday life was widely accepted. This sort of attitude welcomed the magical approach. And in any age evidence of someone interested in magic, astrology, or alchemy is evidence of a frame of mind which is hospitable to miracles and to some form of a Secret Tradition. The Hermetic Sciences do not themselves represent the occultists' Traditions; but they are symptoms of a recourse to them.

The last common characteristic of the defeated faiths is reverence for the East as the source of wisdom. The mysterious East was no invention of the 18th and 19th centuries. The Mysteries of Mithras came from the East. Plotinus went with Gordian to the East. Gnosticism shows many Eastern influences, and was in certain forms a specifically Oriental religion. It was in the East that Damascius and the last of the Athenian Neo-Platonists hoped to find their refuge. The whole emphasis on the miraculous and non-rational basis of belief which was so alien to the spirit of Greek thought came from the East in the form of religion.[31] The astrological ideas which so permeated religious and philosophical thought derived from Chaldea (Assyria and Babylon). In Greek thought during the first few centuries of the Christian era an exaggerated reverence existed for the barbarian ability to communicate with the divine. It was felt that as rationalism had failed to provide a satisfactory solution, the more irrational peoples might have retained what was assumed to have been a primitive ability. Thus Diogenes Laertius praises indiscriminately the Chaldean Magi, the Druids, and the Egyptians. It was in Egypt that the chief repository of occult secrets was imagined by the Greeks to lie. Here the great hero, the Master Pythagoras, had journeyed.[32] To some 19th- and 20th-century occultists the Greek fascination with Egypt was to remain; but with increasing knowledge of the further Orient the tendency became to push the source of wisdom into India. Thus René Guénon argues the similarity between Platonic and Neo-Platonic Greek thought and Hindu doctrine; and he observes that

the idea of the world being composed of atoms, which was supported in Greece, had long before been maintained in Eastern thought.[33] The attitude of reverence for the East is nevertheless the same at a distance of fifteen centuries.

Another persistent factor is the fascination with Pythagoras. His popularity among devotees of Secret Traditions in all ages furnishes a good example of the occult hero. Even the mystical philosophers of the period we have been discussing knew very little about Pythagoras. Therefore he was a fit candidate for the role of Master of Hidden Wisdom. What little is known fits admirably with the religious inclinations of the first few centuries after Christ. After his travels to the East in search of wisdom, Pythagoras settled (says the legend) at Crotona in Italy and formed a brotherhood. This was in the 6th century B.C. The teachings he gave to his disciples are shadowy, but seem to contain parts of the Orphic doctrines together with his theory of transmigration of souls—that is, reincarnation as it is popularly understood.[34] The rules which he is supposed to have given his brotherhood are frankly magical. One must not sacrifice a cock, for example, because it is dedicated to moon and sun; the right shoe should always be put on before the left. They also contain the severe admonition: "Do not sit on a quart measure. . . ."[35] According to inclination, this traditionally sage figure could be made the supporter of almost any point of view—and nothing more illustrates the dependence of occult thought upon the time and place of its origins than its adoption, often indiscriminately, of attitudes and opinions which belong historically only to that time and place. This happened because for centuries the only philosophical basis which existed as an alternative to the Christian point of view was an assemblage of diverse beliefs culled from the religions Christianity had defeated. For a long time these alien ways of thought were rigorously excluded from Western Europe.

The conquest of Europe by the Christian faith was made easier by the previous victory of the Roman state reli-

gion throughout Italy and Gaul. Everywhere local deities had been transformed into their Roman counterparts. Christianity had merely to establish itself securely as the reigning state religion, and purge the remnants of the old.[36] Of course the process was not simple, though the result was clear: the ordinary Christian of the Middle Ages lived and died in the Church—as he would have said, "in Christ"—and outside the Christian frame of reference there was no reality. If anything was perceived as existing outside the Christian structure of society, it was evil, and to be destroyed. It therefore makes sense to speak of an "Establishment culture" as dominating medieval Europe. This culture had the sanction of God and man. It had the sanction of God, claimed the Popes, not only because of the ministry of Christ, but because Christ had explicitly charged Peter with the maintaining of His Church. The Popes, by the laying on of hands, were the successors of Peter, whose word was therefore law. This claim to direct contact with divinity distinguishes the papal position from any other attempt to establish theocratic government.[37] It follows that the type of dominion which the Popes claimed to exercise was exceptionally wide. Geographically speaking, it extended throughout Christian Europe. The real beginning of this monopolistic jurisdiction can be dated to the last years of the 7th century, when Pope Sergius defied the Eastern Emperor Justinian II, and Western Christianity could look only to Rome for direction.[38] Spiritually speaking, it embraced the whole man, his social, intellectual, and political activities, which were in fact not separated one from another at all, but comprehended under the single head of right conduct in Christ.

The approval of the secular Powers That Were to this state of affairs was obtained only to a certain extent. To the ordinary Christian, squabbles between kings, the Holy Roman Emperor, and the papacy about their respective jurisdictions probably made little difference, as long as he himself was not the bone of contention. Kings were in any case kings "by the grace of God." Even the papacy ad-

mitted to secular rulers a measure of divine sanction only less great than that of the Holy See itself.[39] "The Powers that be are ordained by God": such was the only view of society in the Middle Ages. The only alternative to the Establishment point of view was heresy, "the form which all sustained dissent must ultimately take."[40] It is not surprising that occultists find their heroes among the only existing opposition. Nor is it surprising to find some real traces in heresy of the principles cherished by the Secret Tradition.

Heretical doctrine was doctrine condemned by the Church. Generally speaking, such doctrine sprang from the impulse to reform the existing state of affairs, not to destroy, or to set up a real alternative to Christianity. It was the rejection of attempts at reform which turned mere opinion into heresy.[41] But because of the complete control by the Establishment of all spheres of human activity, heretical doctrine could also have social or political implications. What was rejected on social grounds as being subversive to right order might equally well be branded anathema.

A notorious example is the case of the Stedingers. These were a free peasantry of the Weser valley, near Bremen, who relied on their privileges to protect them in their refusal to pay tithes. On Christmas Day, 1229, they committed a cardinal sin in defeating Hermann, Count of Lippe, the brother of the Archbishop of Bremen. Next year the Stedingers were proclaimed heretics by the Archbishop; but they continued to show themselves militarily effective against all comers. Accordingly the Archbishop appealed to the Pope, who ordered an official Crusade to be preached against the hapless peasantry. The affair ended with 6,000 Stedingers dead.[42] Other examples are the use of similar methods by Philip the Fair of France to destroy the wealthy and powerful order of Knights Templar; or the convenient method of disposing of the politically dangerous Joan of Arc by branding her as a sorcerer.[43] Occultists have

taken as heroes Joan, the Templars, and even the Stedingers, in attempts to prove that it was their beliefs which earned their condemnation as opposed to their inconvenient existence giving rise to the legend of their beliefs.[44]

On the other hand, two heresies in particular do show evidence of contact with the sources of the Secret Tradition. These are the heresy of the Cathars and that of the Free Spirit. The first time the name "Cathar" was used was in 1030 of a community at Monteforte in Italy. But the church took deepest root in the Languedoc, where its doctrines had been spread by the Lombard heretic church called *de Concoresso*, which in its turn claimed to derive its faith from "Sclavonia" and Bulgaria.[45] There is certainly evidence to connect the Cathars with the Bulgarian heretics called Bogomils, because both professed versions of Gnosticism. The word "Cathar" probably comes from the Greek "pure," and the Cathar doctrines show the sect to have been Gnostic of the ascetic type. They believed that the world had been created by an evil being—that there were a series of spheres of being between God and the material world—that procreation was evil because it introduced another spark of the divine into matter.[46] These are familiar tenets. In the Languedoc the Cathars flourished, until in 1207 Pope Innocent III solicited help from the magnates of the North to crush the dangerous heresy. Strictly speaking it was not heresy, but a rival religion; and as such it was ruthlessly wiped out. The chief Cathar stronghold of Montségur fell in 1244; but for fifty years afterwards the discovery of persistent believers was to occupy those skilled in sniffing out subversion.[47]

The heresy of the Free Spirit might also be described as a form of Gnosticism, this time of the libertine variety. It seems to have had connections with a new school of Neo-Platonic mysticism represented by Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1327) whose thought was in his own lifetime condemned by the papacy as heretical in a series of twenty-

eight articles,[48] and who at one time was supposed to have written *Schwester Katrei,* one of the treatises of the Free Spirit.

Schwester Katrei describes the progress of Sister Katherine of the Free Spirit in her struggles to know God. Eventually she achieves the state of unity with the Godhead, and remains in an ecstatic coma for three days. On regaining consciousness she claims actually to BE God: "No Soul can come to God unless he is God, as she [Sister Katherine] was and as she had been created."[49] One of the chief charges against the Free Spirit was that of sexual license; and it was part of the doctrine of the sect that the adept might eat and drink what he liked, need not necessarily do any work, might have sexual contact with both male and female, in short procure bodily satisfaction by whatever means he chose.[50] Whether the influence of the sort of Neo-Platonism which Eckhart professed had any influence on the cult or not—and the doctrines of the Free Spirit can be identified in Western Europe sixty years before Eckhart was born[51]—there is no doubt that the heresy was effectively Gnostic. Its sources are unclear; but it would be surprising if every Gnostic believer had been eradicated from Europe. The Cathars and the Free Spirit are the exceptions which prove the rule: the Underground which reveals the Establishment. The nature of heresy being what it was, other viewpoints joined the teachings of those religions which Christianity had conquered in this amorphous territory. Thus, ideas about the religious beliefs of the Templars and the Stedingers are now almost as much part of occult "Tradition" as are ideas about the Cathars, who stand directly in the Tradition. Conversely, the Free Spirit, if it is mentioned at all by occultists, is referred to sparingly, although it also is part of the mainline of Traditional opposition to the Church. If the occult is rejected knowledge, heresy has been exactly the same thing.

But from this brief account of the Cathars and the Free Spirit one thing stands out—the Christian blockade on

ideas was not totally effective. The Cathars of Provence owed ultimate allegiance to a Gnostic church in far-off "Sclavonia." Meister Eckhart is said to have absorbed Neo-Platonism into his mystical system. These ideas had to come from somewhere: they represent motion in the stasis of medieval life. It has been observed that almost every notable event in the history of Western thought in the Middle Ages is connected with someone who studied in Greece, or had access to Greek writings or translations.[52] This points the moral that the gradual flow into Christian Europe of writings of a totally alien spirit to that of the Establishment greatly assisted the collapse of that Establishment during the period of the Renaissance and Reformation. The Eastern Empire is one obvious direction from which some such information could come. Everyone is taught that the Turkish capture of Constantinople sent scholars scurrying to the West in time to add their contribution to the revival of free intellectual speculation in Italy. There was another chink in the papal armor; and one which was much more frequently penetrated. This was the Arab world to the south of the Mediterranean, with its contacts with Sicily and especially with Spain. For the history of occult Traditions it is important that something should be understood of what was at stake when the teachings of Aristotle entered Europe via this route.

The opposition always made between Plato and Aristotle is as Dom David Knowles reminds us, not as great as is sometimes asserted.[53] But its value, even in a simplified form, for illuminating the collapse of the Christian Establishment is immense. Put crudely, Plato is the philosopher of the beyond, of the great metaphysical questions, and of the religious spirit. Aristotle is the exponent of what has come to be called the "scientific method," the careful study of observed data, and the commonsensical drawing of conclusions. It is clear that both Christianity and Neo-Platonism are more akin to Plato than to Aristotle, whatever their differing solutions. Christianity had

early even incorporated a certain amount of neo-Platonic speculation where it did not conflict with its basic premises.[54] The Establishment could, in fact, continue to see theories deriving from Plato and Neo-Platonism as a sort of secular support for the Christian revelation, provided that these ideas did not develop into outright heresy. On the other hand, if the approach of Aristotle obtained a footing in Christian Europe, it would represent a grave threat to right order. The method of careful observation of the material world might not lead necessarily to Christ. For a time, this dangerous aspect of Aristotle was not appreciated by the Church—not until it was too late.

The middle of the 12th century was the main period of activity for translations of Aristotle and Aristotelian works from the Arabic. From about 1240 translations began to make their appearance from the original Greek.[55] The importance of the early Arabic versions is this: that in the course of their travels through the East, and in particular during their process of transformation in the works of the celebrated philosophers Avicenna (who lived in Persia 980-1037) and Averroes (born in Spain 1126, died in exile 1198), the teachings of Aristotle accumulated a burden of Oriental thought, and even became confused with the doctrines of Neo-Platonism.[56] This strange marriage of different traditions resulted in the absorption, during the first flush of enthusiasm for the new knowledge inspired by Aristotle, of a number of Neo-Platonist tenets which were as foreign to the philosopher of the scientific approach as they were to the letter of Christian dogma. For example, the Neo-Platonic *Liber de causis*, which was supposed to be the culmination of Aristotle's philosophy, was prescribed reading for the Paris Faculty of Arts in 1255.[57] When translations from the original Greek became available, the real position of Aristotle could be gradually stripped of such accretions. In this process, the dangerous nature of his thought became more fully apparent. But even in their adulterated state the works of Aristotle could be perceived as undesirable. Their first condemnation took place at Paris

in 1210; and there followed a series of papal and episcopal fulminations, which did little but draw further attention to the novel if proscribed doctrines.

Thus, chiefly through Spain, an approach to philosophy which was eventually to break the hold of the Christian Establishment on every aspect of men's lives made its entry to Europe. But through the same loophole, riding on the back, as it were, of Aristotle, had come Neo-Platonism and other such doctrines, with their origins in the systems of thought which Christianity had conquered in the first few centuries after Christ. It is not without significance that one of the most influential translators of Aristotle from the Arabic was the legendary Michael Scot (1180-1235), the "Wizard of the North," who worked both in Toledo in Spain, and in Sicily, and was chiefly responsible for turning the works of Averroes into Latin.[58]

For besides the intellectual position of Neo-Platonism, there arrived in Europe those more spectacular symptoms of the occultists' tradition—alchemy, astrology, and magic. These attained the relatively exalted height they achieved during the Renaissance partly because of the association of the *Hermetica* with Neo-Platonic currents of thought which carried with them the intellectual prestige of Greek antiquity.[59]

Also swept up in this maelstrom of quasi-religious thought was the great Jewish body of mystical speculation known as the Cabala, one of the chief sources of later occult tradition. A composite body of knowledge alien to that approved by the Christian Establishment was, therefore, to hand when the Establishment hold on Europe was finally broken during the great crisis of Renaissance and Reformation.

This is not the place to discuss the reasons why this occurred. Sufficient to say that the methods of Aristotle played no small part in encouraging man to examine what he saw around him without reference to its supposed pattern in the cosmic scheme of the Christian God. The measure of intellectual freedom which resulted was

augmented by the increasing number of texts which became available to show the full breadth of philosophical speculation that had been possible in antiquity. This sudden revelation of what was still possible seems to have induced giddiness. One not uncommon reaction was pure panic. The emergence of the individual from the certainties of all-embracing medieval Christianity naturally gave rise to great social convulsions. Creeds sprung up where every man might have the assurance of being his own priest.[60] Superstition, in the sense of fundamentalist credulity in hobgoblins and all manner of foul fiends, ran riot.

The most extraordinary example of this mass psychosis is the persecution of the witches. This perennially knotty problem is especially illuminated if we compare it with a 19th-century witch-hunt which has already been discussed—the campaign by certain elements of the Roman Church against the Freemasons. In the case of the witch-persecutions, the fictions of Léo Taxil were anticipated by the credulity of a pair of Dominican inquisitors, Heinrich Krämer and Jacob Sprenger, who were responsible for soliciting the first Papal Bull against witches in 1484. From this date the hitherto sporadic witch-burnings were given universal sanction. Two years later, Krämer and Sprenger published the notorious *Malleus Maleficarum*, which incorporated their investigations into what they conceived of as the witch-cult among the Alpine peasantry, and thus gave form and substance to the idea of a Satanic Church.[61]

Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper argues that the sections of the population victimized as witches were those which feudal society had found difficulty in assimilating; and he draws attention to the simultaneous persecution of the Jews.[62] The one drawback to this otherwise convincing thesis is that by the time of the witch-persecutions proper, "feudal" society as such had disintegrated; however, the principle of persecuting any group opposed to the Powers That Were finds ample precedent in the case of the Stedingers. It may be presumptuous to say it, but I fear Professor Trevor-Roper misses the point. He compares the

witch-craze with the "McCarthyite" scare in America of the 1950s, rightly points out that the latter persecution was engendered by fear of a different kind of society,[63] yet neglects to press his comparison home. The witch-trials may well have been directed against awkward and independent sections of society, but it seems more likely that it was their consciousness of the changes taking place in that very society rather than some more or less political motive which induced the witch-hunters to discover scapegoats. The devil was abroad, was rocking the boat—how else could the certainties of the Christian faith be defied by heretics? It is noteworthy, too, that Calvinist Scotland, a nation of heretics, was as assiduous as Catholic countries in persecuting witches. Any denomination, traditionalist or reforming, might feel the anxiety occasioned by the new freedom, with the personal responsibility which that implied.

The extreme hatred which had been excited by heresy was, therefore, turned upon the witches. It is noticeable that as the incidence of heresy increased in the Middle Ages, so did the fanaticism of its persecutors.[64] The Inquisition itself had first been established apparently as a temporary measure, and its permanent institution dates only from 1273.[65] It was as if the upholders of the Christian Establishment sensed the increasing precariousness of its position. It required the shock of Lutheranism, Calvinism, and widespread apostasy to throw the Roman Church into the policy of Counter-Reformation which it adopted after the Council of Trent (1545-63). But no such diabolical agitation had been noticeable on the part of Satan's servitors. It seems, rather, that they were discovered in increasing numbers during a period of turmoil the causes of which were quite other. The fiercest period of witch-burning coincided with the period in which men's consciousness of the break-up of the old world and their consequent anxiety would have been most acute—not when old certainties first seemed threatened, but when they were seen to have gone. The decline of the witch-craze in the late

17th century coincides with a measure of adaptation to the new state of affairs, and the discovery by churches and states of a viable compromise.

The correspondences between the flight from circumstances of the 15th and 16th centuries, and the flight from reason of the 19th century are very marked. Reason, as a creed, did not exist in the earlier period. But the new learning, by which so much store was set, furnished an equivalent, in that its very newness was a challenge to the one and only truth. For those who disliked the new learning for what it might do, while remaining attracted by the fashion, there were interesting possibilities in the Neo-Platonic and magical doctrines, which had the advantage of seeming as new as Aristotle—in many cases actually newer—while allowing a larger place for the religious impulse. It is noticeable that the Renaissance exponents of the Secret Traditions always used them "In Christ," that is, to strengthen the edifice of the world they felt disrupted. Thus, the Abbot Trithemius (1462-1516), one of the most notable of the Renaissance Magi, wrote in 1508 against witchcraft; yet he continued to profess himself an adherent of natural magic, and he claimed occult knowledge by revelation.[66] This attitude is very different to that popularly expected of a right-thinking Christian priest. It will therefore be in order to examine the more specifically magical parts of the occult Traditions to see exactly how a Christian could turn to them in all good faith.

Astrology, alchemy, ritual magic, and the Cabala are four elements of the Tradition of the occultists. The first three have already been mentioned as part of the complex of religious belief which Christianity displaced. The Cabala is a later accretion, joining the Traditions proper during the Renaissance, but with connections with Tradition that are much earlier. If the chief characteristic of the magical viewpoint is a system of correspondences unseen but assumed by the believer, astrology is the most straightforward of its manifestations.

"As above, so below" runs one of the most famous of the

Hermetic maxims, and this well describes the position of the astrologer. His Tradition survived the period of the Christian takeover, transmitted from pagan speculation through such treatises as the *Mathesis* of Firmicius (who lived in Sicily about the time of Constantine) and the works of Macrobius.[67] During the early Middle Ages there was a neglect of astrology. But with the arrival of Aristotle and the Neo-Platonists in Europe, fresh life was given to the theories; and when early synthesizers like St. Thomas Aquinas incorporated some parts of Aristotle in their thought, astrology was absorbed too. St. Thomas considered that as long as astrology could prove it was part of the natural sciences, it was a permissible study. Although there are isolated instances of astrologers being burned for heresy—like Cecco d'Ascoli, who had foolishly maintained that the stars could have affected the ministry of Christ, in 1327—there were chairs of astrology from the 13th to the 16th centuries at Bologna, Padua, and Milan. Michael Scot made predictions for the Emperor Frederick II. By the time of the Renaissance, the court astrologer was a familiar figure.[68]

Yet another of the Hermetic disciplines which could claim to be part of the natural sciences was alchemy. Its significance has been debated *ad nauseam;* with very little agreement beyond the fact that it originated in Graeco-Roman Egypt at the time that saw the compiling of the *Hermetica.* Current fashion in mystical philosophy was combined with the severely practical traditions of the Egyptian goldsmith. If at first hearing this seems odd, it is possible to imagine a moralizing philosopher starting the whole business of speculative alchemy by finding in the laborious processes of refining, combining, and perfecting metal ore an apt illustration of the way in which the soul must be purified, polished, and itself perfected in order to achieve salvation. This is exactly what was later to happen in the case of the Freemasons. A practical craft, that of stone-working, was made to bear a symbolic significance and all manner of weighty concepts about the destiny of the soul

were allied to the Mason's tools. Alchemy, from being a practical craft of the metal-worker, became first a philosophy and then a religion. But craft, philosophy, and religion remained almost inextricably intertwined;[69] and alchemists continued for centuries to seek the real transmutation of the base metal into gold, while also soliciting the symbolic transformation of their unworthy souls into the "gold" of the soul united with God. The various stages in this complex process of spiritual refinement were all given technical terms which might seem to relate to the making of physical gold;[70] and the mistaken view of the real nature of alchemy which resulted from this was probably responsible for the continuing toleration of the "science" by the Establishment. Alchemy entered Europe with the influx of Aristotelian thought in the 12th and 13th centuries. Texts like the *Perfect Mastery* of Gerber and the *Turba Philosophorum* provided the basis for alchemists of the latter Middle Ages. St. Thomas Aquinas accepted the possibility of the transmutation of metals;[71] and although Pope John XXII supposedly issued a decretal against alchemy, it continued to be held by jurists that the making and selling of alchemists' gold was a perfectly legal practice.[72]

Ritual magic is one part of the occult view of the universe with which the Church could seldom come to terms —although certain milder forms of invocation may even have been used by a Pope. While the earliest magical records known date back to 1800 B.C., the basis of ritual magic is contained in a collection of papyri originating in Egypt in the same period as saw the birth and elaboration of alchemy and the Hermetic writings. Such magical procedures are founded on elaborate ceremonies for conjuring up spirits and compelling them to work the magician's will.[73] While the idea of hierarchies of demons was given some countenance by the Neo-Platonists, the chief debt of the ritual magician is to Jewish mysticism. The names of the spirits he summons are of Jewish origin, and their attributes much more complex than, say, Proclus's classification of

demons into those of fire, air, water, earth, and the subterranean regions. There is, for example, the horrifying Sphendonael, who causes "tumors of the parotid gland, inflamations of the tonsils and tetanic recurvation." In the Middle Ages treatises like the *Testament of Solomon* give magic an explicitly Jewish origin. The later reputation of the Great King's powers as a Magus is founded on the legend of how he built the Temple at Jerusalem with the aid of spirits he subdued for the purpose.[74] It is probable that magical texts were also part of the baggage of Aristotle when the first translations arrived in Europe. But attempts to Christianize ritual magic—certain forms could be theologically justified—usually ended in grotesque parodies of both Christianity and magic itself. One such attempt was the *Constitution of Honorius,* fondly attributed to Pope Honorius III and first printed in 1629, in which fasting, prayer, Confession, and Mass alternate with the killing of a black cock and the mutilation of a lamb. The whole farrago was prefaced with a concocted Bull to the Church hierarchy, giving instructions for the commanding of spirits.[75]

The numerous Jewish elements within ritual magic indicate that there is a more extensive Jewish element in the thought of the Traditions than has been admitted so far. The Jewish genius for complicated metaphysics and occult speculation has provided occultists with some of their most erudite Traditional sources of inspiration. The Cabala, itself a Jewish word for Tradition, embodies these sources. For the history of European occultism two Cabalistic books are important: the early (3rd to 6th century) *Sefer Yetsirah,* the Book of Creation; and the later (late 13th century) *Sefer Ha-Zohar,* the book of Splendor, probably written by one Moses de Leon, and certainly in Spain.

Of the long and complicated story of Jewish mysticism it is only necessary to recall here that an important element is the correspondence between the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and a numerical value—and that on this typically "occult" idea of "sympathies" has been erected an amazing

framework of speculation. In the *Sefer Yetsirah* the similarity with Gnostic theories is most marked: scholars indeed speak of a "Jewish Gnosticism."[76] There are stated to be ten *Sefiroth*—sets of forces, qualities, or the elements of creation—which in combination form the whole world. This concept was elaborated, particularly by the 13th century *Zohar*, into a mysticism by which the adept could ascend toward the Godhead by, as it were, absorbing into his being the qualities of all the *Sefiroth* in sequence. These supposed elements of creation can be drawn diagrammatically. The adept was supposed to work his way along the "paths" from one to another until, having achieved full mystical knowledge of the whole of creation, he achieved knowledge of God.[77]

Such doctrines could easily be assimilated into the thought of the Tradition. The *Sefer Yetsirah* (embodying a form of Gnostic doctrine) and the *Zohar* (written in Spain, on the route of the Traditions into Europe) can be seen as but the Jewish form of the Secret Wisdom. A certain amount of interaction between the two Traditions can be discovered. For example, it seems that the Jewish Cabalists of Provence, who incorporated the doctrine of the transmigration of souls into their book *Bahir*, took the concept from the Cathar religion which flourished in the same era.[78] And in the assimilation of Jewish Cabalistic teaching into the framework of Christian mysticism on the one hand and occult Tradition on the other, the role played by converted Jews was of the greatest importance. The first Jewish convert to occupy himself with the Cabala was Abner of Burgos, who about 1320 became Christian under the name of Alfonso of Valladolid. He contrived to identify the Cabalistic personage Metatron—who is said to sit at God's right hand—with the person of the Son in the Trinity.[79] In Renaissance attempts to derive support from Traditional knowledge for the Christian position, this form of identification was continued. For example, Pico della Mirandola decided that the three highest *Sefiroth*—Kether, representing the Supreme Diadem, Hokhmah, wisdom, and Binah,

understanding—could be equated with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.[80]

Those who turned to the Traditions during the Renaissance did not often do so from panic: the Establishment was assailed, but it had not fallen. Neither was the Christian religion in danger of total extinction, as it was to appear to be 300 years later. Certainly there were notable examples of recoiling from the consequences of personal responsibility. This state of mind finds its best expression in astrological fatalism—for if the stars control men's actions, there is no use in worrying about freedom of action. One will do what one will do whether one wills it or not. Thus, Louise of Savoy (the mother of Francis I of France) was a great believer in astrology, and she appointed as her physician the magician Henry Cornelius Agrippa. Catherine de'Medici placed herself entirely in the hands of seers like Nostradamus and the astrologer Luca Ganrico.[81] But the philosophical aspects of the various Traditions were too complex to be grasped by a large section of society, and in every age they have had something of the scholarly about them. Popular anxiety might find relief in burning witches or hunting heretics. But the scholar or philosopher, though not immune from anxiety, would turn for assistance to means most natural to him. So it came about that the thought of the Traditions appeared for a brief time in the open air, under the full eye of the Establishment, before once more returning underground.

The store of subversive learning already in Europe was reinforced during the Renaissance by the acquisition of new sources from the East. A fresh influx of alchemical literature appeared from Byzantium.[82] But most important was the visit to Florence in 1438 of the Byzantine Platonist Pletho, who was later to found a community at Mistra in Greece where he taught a creed based on Plato and Neo-Platonism. This visit inspired revivals of Neo-Platonism, such as those in the "Academy" of Pomponio Leto in Rome, and, most importantly, the Florentine Academy of Marsilio Ficino. In such honor was Pletho held that, when he died, his body

was exhumed and brought from Greece to lie in Italian soil.[83] Pletho himself was primarily a political reformer who used Platonic philosophy to combat Christian theology. But from him Ficino absorbed the idea of a Tradition of Wisdom to which, with Plato, belonged Zoroaster, Hermes, Trismegistus, Orpheus and, of course, Pythagoras.[84]

In 1462 Cosimo de'Medici gave Ficino a villa near Florence in which to teach Platonic philosophy, and a manuscript of the *Hermetica* to translate which he had received two years earlier from a monk who had brought it from Macedonia.[85] Ficino's translation was widely circulated, and his readers shared with the translator the conviction that Hermes Trismegistus was a real person, worthy of the reverence and respect which the most noble pagans commanded. Thus, into the melting-pot out of which the Powers That Were had somehow to forge a new interpretation of the world, taking into account the new knowledge, was thrown a scarcely refined lump of Gnostic doctrine. In France, the popularity of Hermes was encouraged by such writers as Lefèvre d'Etaples and Du Plessis Mornay. Around Catherine de'Medici and in the circle of poets which was known as the *Pléiade* his teachings were well-known; and it was observed how men were turning to the Hermetic teachings to lift themselves out of the strife-torn world.[86] Of native Italian Hermetists the most notable were Pico della Mirandola and the remarkable Giordano Bruno.

Bruno was burned for his Hermetic doctrines, and Pico was at one time condemned. Their mutual inspirer, Ficino—who turned priest in 1473—had conceived of Hermes and Plato as aids to persuading those to religion who would not accept the Scripture alone.[87] This reasoning appears eventually to have been endorsed by the Church in the case of Pico, who joined to his Hermetism a "Christian Cabala," and concocted a universal system in which Cabalistic ideas played a considerable part. Although condemned by a tribunal, Pico's synthesis was rehabilitated in 1493 by Alexander VI, whose recognition of the Cabalist as a loyal son of the Church seemed to give some authority to

Pico's position.[88] It should be remembered in this context that Sixtus IV (Pope, 1471-84) had himself translated seventy Cabalistic books into Latin,[89] and that the concept of the "Christian Cabala" was not peculiar to Italian thought. Reuchlin, the foremost Orientalist of the time, and the author of the first Hebrew grammar, came nearest to success in the attempt to transform the Cabala into Christian philosophy[90]—although his pupil Widmanstadt considered the Jewish tradition as "a Trojan horse introduced into the Church."[91]

But the Hermetists and Cabalists of the Renaissance were always maintaining their orthodoxy. Agrippa stoutly protested what his contemporaries considered his doubtful Catholicity.[92] On the other hand, there were strange doings where one would least expect them. Ficino used a watered-down form of "natural magic," in which the idea of occult sympathy was used to elevate the spirit. To attract the influence of any particular planet he would use plants, animals and other things subject to that planet. But he also used ritual magic which involved the summoning of spirits.[93] At Venice, at the end of the 16th century, Fabio Paolini, a professor of Greek and lecturer on Poetry and Eloquence in the library of St. Mark's, ran a magical Academy on Neo-Platonic principles.[94]

Magic did not remain in the libraries: it came out on the streets. In Rome in 1484 appeared the magnificent figure of Joannes Mercurius de Corigio, wearing a crown of thorns with the inscription, "This is my boy Pimander (the name of a Hermetic treatise) whom I have chosen," and distributing leaflets. Seven years later he turned up again at Lyon in the same garb, performed several miracles with the aid of natural magic, and promised Louis XII and his son twenty years' extra life.[95] Magic even penetrated to the papal closet. Pope Urban VIII, a firm believer in astrology who used to irritate his cardinals by predicting the dates of their deaths, became disconcerted in the year 1628 by malicious rumors circulated by his political opponents that his own death was imminent. In the papal prisons at this

time was the renegade Dominican Tommaso Campanella, who had narrowly escaped execution after the failure of his attempt some years earlier to set up in Calabria his Utopian "City of the Sun." Campanella practiced magic; and it seems fairly certain that while he and the Pope were closeted together the pair were taking measures against the dangerous eclipse of the moon that January.[96]

In other words, the material of the occult Traditions, whether in the rarified form of metaphysical speculation, or in the practical manifestation of magic, was common currency. This resulted from a period of uncertainty during which both the cultivated and the uncultured alike were searching for a departed security. The New Man of the Renaissance, liberated from his prison of the Middle Ages, flexed his muscles, and tried them on the Traditions. Painters incorporated Neo-Platonic symbolism in their work.[97] Scholars and philosophers looked to Hermes, Orpheus, and Moses—who in one legend was supposed to have been given the Cabala by God on Mount Sinai—to supplement the Christian truths. The figure of the Renaissance man of learning is not complete if the place of the Magician is forgotten. Ficino was scholar, priest, and magician. Dr. Dee was a mathematician and cryptographer as well as spiritualist. Agrippa and Bruno moved with freedom through the centers of learned Europe. In the first stumblings towards scientific medicine the magical theories of Paracelsus played some part.[98] But after the turmoil of the transitional period had subsided the Traditions returned to their status as the interest of a tiny minority. They went underground—joined once more the Opposition—because during the crisis of Renaissance and Reformation, Aristotle and the scientific method had won.

The Traditions had entered Europe with Aristotle, but, as has been explained, they were totally alien to the spirit of that philosopher. For a time the two strands of thought could draw support from the same sources. Both were opposed to the over-subtle theological approach of the late

Middle Ages, and both employed practical experiment—for magical experiment is as "practical" as any other.[99] But the Traditional view is founded on faith, and is a religious attitude, while the approach of the Aristotelians was that of discovery by obervation of what was. Paracelsian medicine, for example, was obviously founded on faith rather than observation. Nor could this school of thought compete with the "scientific method" in terms of effective cure. Not when its founder could sincerely maintain that a man could live without food if planted in the ground like a tree.[100]

While the thoughts of man turned increasingly to earthly rather than to heavenly ends the successful approach to life was that which showed practical results. The Church of Rome reacted by reasserting her own traditional position, and eventually an uneasy compromise was arrived at with the other churches and the increasingly independent states of Europe. Rome still blew the trumpet against heretics, but with a muted note. There were still religious wars. But by the 18th century the scientific method had triumphed, the Age of Reason began its much-publicized career—and the witch-persecutions ceased. There was still an Establishment position, however. Although challenged on every side by the growth of scepticism and social discontent, the various alliances of churches and states contrived a unified front on the problems of social order. The Powers That Were were ordained of God; but increasingly troops had to be called in to reinforce the Divine sanction. The debate between Establishment and Underground had turned to social questions rather than religious or philosophical. Still the occultists' Traditions did not disappear. In fact changed conditions added yet further ramifications to this underground of rejected knowledge.

With Reason and Order in the saddle, the more familiar aspects of the Traditions did not die out. Knorr von Rosenreuth's *Kabbala Denudata* of 1677 became the source for later generations of Cabalists. The alchemical tradition

was not neglected. The century of the so-called Enlightenment saw one of the most ludicrous attempts to effect the transmutation that can ever have been made.

A novice alchemist named Duchanteau decided that the symbolic interpretation of alchemy had not gone far enough. The well-known principles of that science—that the Low should be exalted on High, and that the alchemical matter, its container, and the fire to heat it should form part of the same object—he took to mean that gold would be made by the alchemist who drank his own urine. For this ceremonial deed he underwent a preparatory fast, designed to last forty days. He was stopped, however, after twenty-six by his disturbed supervisors. Infuriated, he began to fast again; but he died on the sixteenth day. The urine from his first attempt was preserved in the archives of the Masonic Lodge where his fast had taken place. There it remained until destroyed during the French Revolution. It was said to have been "sweet-smelling"; and it was venerated as a relic. 1789 itself was the year of publication of the *Great Work Revealed* of P.-L. Jacob, another alchemical fantasist,[101] but it is fairer to say that the crucibles and retorts had been largely abandoned to the natural scientists. Since the publications of Jacob Boehme, the Görlitz shoemaker and mystic,[102] the philosophical aspects of the Hermetic science were studied in preference to the practical; and eccentrics like Duchanteau must in all ages be the exceptions rather than the rule.

The chief concern of the 18th-century seeker after Hidden Wisdom was discovering its hiding-places. In the prevailing atmosphere of scepticism and disillusionment *someone* must surely know all the answers, so ran the argument—and they must be keeping it quiet. There was, therefore, great interest in secret societies, the earliest of which, the Rosicrucian Brotherhood, first announced itself to the world in a manifesto published at Cassel in 1614. There is great dispute over whether this society really existed—whether its two public statements were an elaborate hoax—and who, supposing its real existence, could have

been behind it. In the last resort it does not really matter. The important fact is that it was *believed* to exist, and to be in possession of secret knowledge. By the beginning of the 18th century English occultists had become interested in a real secret society, with which the Rosy Cross came afterwards to be associated. This was the fraternity of the Freemasons, a survival of the medieval craft-guilds, still preserving its ancient rules of secrecy now as a matter of form (where once it had been necessary to protect the trade of working stone). In 1717 the Grand Lodge of England was founded by a union of four London Lodges. Five years later this body commissioned from a clergyman called James Anderson, who regarded the affair as a purely commercial transaction, *The Book of the Constitutions*, which became the Masonic Bible. Anderson performed his task well, and constructed, in the high-flown manner of the 18th century, an imposing pedigree for the Freemasons—a rough equivalent today might be a burlesque history concocted for a City Livery Company. Pythagoras and Zoroaster were said to have been Freemasons—and, of course, Solomon, the great magician and builder of the Temple.[103]

Even before the publication of this suggestive piece of "evidence," occultists had homed on the Freemasons. The scholarly alchemist Elias Ashmole seems to have had himself initiated into the Lodge at Warrington, Lancashire, with a view to discovering hidden mysteries. The antiquarian parson and doctor, William Stukeley (1687-1765), admitted that he became a Mason in 1721 because he suspected Masonry to be "the remains of the mysteries of the ancients." The next year appeared a mad pamphlet entitled "Long Livers" addressed to the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge by "Eugenius Philalethes Junior," telling the story of a number of alchemists who artificially prolonged their lives. The author was obviously seeking for "Masons of the highest grade," by which was meant Rosicrucians.[104]

The association of Masonry with occult knowledge grew and was reinforced by the institution by occultists who had penetrated the Lodges, of ceremonies based on occult sym-

bolism, particularly that of alchemy and the Cabala, and of attempts to duplicate the effects of the Mystery-religions by a series of initiations. Thus, above the highest grade in English Masonry, Cabalists instituted the grade of the Royal Arch, based upon their preferred symbolism.[105] Still higher and more "occult" grades were added by those who valued such things. Eventually arose the legend—which always lives behind occult Masonry—that there were "Secret Chiefs"—"Unknown Superiors"—who held themselves aloof from the normal affairs of the Brotherhood, but were themselves in possession of the ultimate secrets. (This was to become a common occult doctrine. The Theosophical Masters derived from the same theory.) Partly responsible for this train of thought were the Martinist Orders of speculative Masonry, which stemmed from the teachings of Martinès de Pasqually (died 1774), the founder of the Order of the Elus Coëns. This Order died with its founder's death. But the idea of Hidden Chiefs survived in the doctrines of other speculative Orders, carried by the chief disciple of Martinès de Pasqually, J.-B. Willermoz, a leading mover in Masonic politicking of the 18th century, and a believer in Hidden Chiefs who were actually supernatural.[106] There were other occult orders and many other supporters of the "Hidden Chiefs," particularly in Germany and Sweden; but Martinist doctrines, transmitted either by Willermoz through Masonry, or through the teachings of his fellow-disciple, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, stand as the type for others.

Despite the accumulation of more moss, the rolling stone of the Tradition continued to be examined closely by a few. In the 17th century the Cambridge Platonists, chief among whom were Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, continued the study of its doctrines at source. In the 18th and early 19th centuries, the translations by Thomas Taylor (1768-1835) of Plato and the Neo-Platonists inspired among others William Blake in England, and in America Bronson Alcott and Ralph Waldo Emerson.[107] Emerson, Alcott, and the other Transcendentalists were not the only ones to find

inspiration both in the European Tradition and in the new doctrines from the East. The French commentator who discovered in the *Bhagavad Gita* Illuminism, Spinoza, and Berkeley[108]—all philosophies borrowing not a little from Traditional sources—had been anticipated by that pioneer Orientalist Sir William Jones, whose first assessment of Hindu doctrine on his arrival in India had been that it bore "a wonderful resemblance to the doctrines of Plato."[109]

The wheel had turned full circle. Reverence for the occultists' Traditions could once more include reverence for the East whence, indeed, much of these Traditions had arisen.

Up till the Age of Reason, the collection of beliefs which modern occultists have used as a quarrying-ground can be shown to have had a certain consistency. This consistency is a mystical-philosophical-religious approach deriving from the religions displaced by Christianity. This approach remains the nucleus of occult Tradition.

Because its terminology seems in some way most apt to express the experiences of individual mystics, such mystics have often turned to Tradition when seeking to communicate their insights to others.[110] When Swedenborg began to have mystical visions his mind turned to the occult theory of correspondences; and the system he constructed owes much to his reading of Plotinus.[111] Because Andrew Jackson Davis drew inspiration from Swedenborg, his own system bears some relation to Tradition. Combine such derived theories with Spiritualism, mix, stir according to taste, and Archduke Johann of Austria is able to observe that Baron Hellenbach's brand of Spiritualism ". . . presented to me an unsatisfactory revival of the Indian metempsychosis theory, Christian morals, the mysticism of the Middle Ages, and Kant's philosophy."[112]

It has been asserted that the occult is rejected knowledge. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the hitherto relatively coherent body of the Secret Traditions became confused beyond measure by a mass of accretions for which the new

Rationalist Establishment could find no place. At the same time, occultists themselves—whether from increasing dissatisfaction with a progressively materialist Establishment, or whether from a real loss of understanding of what the Traditional positions had signified for others in the past—began to multiply marvels. The incorporation of Freemasonry into the Tradition is a case in point. To join this underground of non-Christian, and non-Rationalist speculation came all the casualties of the advance of science. Theories rejected for personal or political ends, together with many which were completely crazy—sciences which were down at heel—and a few unwanted social projects—all these might find a place in the occult underground. The most obvious of rejected theories are the pseudo-sciences.

The term "pseudo-science" is, of course, the term of the scientific Establishment. It should be said at once that this particular establishment is very good at defining what is and what is not its province. For every reason advanced by modern occultists as to why their chosen science has been rejected, there are probably a dozen to oppose their arguments, starting with the simple statement, "It doesn't work." It is nonetheless quite possible to imagine a society which, for reasons of its own, might have developed the "science" of phrenology or palmistry, to a certain degree of accuracy. There were certainly good reasons for rejecting Mesmer—the investigators could find no trace of his "magnetic fluid." Yet the incidence of mesmeric cures continued, and the "mesmeric sleep" is still occasionally employed in medicine. A similar rejection met homoeopathy, the brain-child of Samuel Hahnemann, who first gave his theory to the world in 1796, and later embodied it in the much revised *Organon of Rational Healing*. The homoeopathic principle is that illness is cured by minute doses of a drug which might have caused the disease in the first place. In the early 19th century there were some successes claimed for the system. But like Mesmerism, Homoeopathy has never gained the approval of the medical

Establishment, and frequently joins the occultists in their limbo. It is significant to know that Mary Baker Eddy was at one time married to a homoeopath, and that Adrien Péladan (the brother of the Sar) was a subscriber to the same theories.

One more example will suffice from a list which, if complete, would fill another book. Carl Baron Reichenbach (1788-1869), a chemist of some reputation among whose discoveries was that of creosote (1832), compromised himself in the eyes of the scientific world by the attention which he paid to "sensitives"—people supposedly psychic. There was, he claimed, an "Odic Force" by which they could perceive properly magnetized objects. This was not magnetism, electricity, or heat, but an all-pervading something else. In 1862 seven Berlin professors of Physics denounced his inconclusive experiments; and Reichenbach retired to sulk in his castle.[113]

The Odic force was obviously analogous to Mesmerism, and as such ripe for the occultists' plucking. But it is interesting that Mesmer himself had been originally inspired by Paracelsus—and that Hahnemann's method of medical practice is Paracelsian in theory.[114]

The pseudo-sciences, in fact, are not sciences at all, but offshoots of an approach which is similar to the Tradition, even if there is no direct connection. It is, therefore, not merely rejection from the Establishment which pushes the homoeopaths into the arms of the occultists, but a fundamental kinship. Such a kinship can be seen also in the work of the polymath Gustav Fechner (born 1801), hailed by some modern psychologists as the founder of experimental psychology.[115] Fechner was Professor of Physics at Leipzig from 1834, but his reputation has remained suspect in the eyes of more orthodox scientists chiefly because of his persistent advocacy of a consciousness permeating all creation; for example in *The Soul Life of Plants* of 1848.[116] That the idea of the soul-life of plants is also expressed by Goethe is only to lead the eye to Goethe's own Traditional sources: for the origin of the concept is in Plato. The scientific

Establishment has always been quite right to reject this sort of approach, because the origins of its own method are to be found in Aristotle. It is indeed with the occultists that people like Fechner belong. And what is Reichenbach's Odic Force, if not the magical idea of unseen correspondences? As the pragmatic Scots of *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* wrote of the Force in 1850, "to believe in the existence of what we are utterly incapable of perceiving, is a severe exercise of faith."[117] Now these theories may indicate legitimate fields of study, but they are not sciences. They were dignified with the title of sciences only in an attempt to make them acceptable to the Establishment. Such attempts are almost always doomed to failure. It was in the same vain hope that occultists of the 19th century began to term their beliefs "occult science."[118]

In the way the trail of the Traditions became confused, and the ever more zany speculations of souls at sea in the world of Rationalism helped to confuse it. Two illustrations will show the sort of process by which this occurred—two subjects of perennial fascination to modern occultists: the Druids, and the Great Pyramid.

The Druids from the 16th century onwards have been objects of fascination in their isolation in early history. Sufficiently little is known about them for them to have always been, like Pythagoras, candidates for the accolade of Masters of the Hidden Wisdom. In 1536, when Renaissance Europe was still obsessed with the Secret Traditions, John Bellenden's translation of Boece's *History of the Scots* declared the rites of the Druids to have been like old books of the Egyptians.[119] There followed a rapid growth in Druidical speculation, very much in the mold in which Anderson was to cast his specious history of Freemasonry. John Caius of Cambridge claimed that that University had been founded by the Druids. Eccentric speculations were made on the basis of even stranger evidence that the Druids wore galoshes.[120] John Selden, annotating Drayton's *Polyolbion* in an admittedly "poetic" spirit, claimed that the Druids had taught doctrine resembling that of Pythagoras,

the Cabala, and the early Christians; while John Milton continued the comparison with Pythagoras (for which there is some classical sanction) and added that with the Chaldean Magi (for which there is none).[121] There arose a whole school of "Druidical Cabalists." The phrase "Druidical Cabala" was in use in 1764, and in the same year one Rowland Jones in *The Origin of the English Language and Nations* claimed that the English tongue was the original language of mankind, and that the Druids had used English as the Cabalists used Hebrew to construct a complicated mystical theology.[122]

The theory that Druidical religion was actually the primitive religion of all mankind appealed to antiquarian and occultist alike. It found numerous supporters, and discovered its most fervent protagonist in that same William Stukeley who entered Masonry hoping to find in it the relics of the ancient Mystery-religions. Stukeley was obsessed with Druidism. He signed his correspondence, "Chyndonax, Archdruid," and with his enthusiasm begins the association of Stonehenge with the Druids. At one point he believed that Hermes Trismegistus had built his own Egyptian temples in the form of Stonehenge, and that the Druids had learned the principle from "their masters."[123] Stukeley is responsible for a whole crop of theories analyzing the symbolic importance of stone circles, burial mounds, and other archaeological curiosities. His influence on Blake seems undoubted.

It would be quite possible to expand this outline to show how Druidical speculation is connected with similar kite-flying about Atlantis. But the more occult applications are our concern. The Druidical theories gave birth in the 19th century to a cult known as "Bardism," whose members professed the articles of faith of the Church of England, while apparently holding to some almost Gnostic tenets and celebrating rites of "a Masonic character."[124] It is tempting to speculate that the influence of Stukeley was responsible for the Masonic ceremonial. But any occultist of an antiquarian cast of mind—and most possess this—could have

made the "connection." Even across the Atlantic a body of schismatic Masons in Newburgh on the Hudson River had in the 18th century become "The Druid Society." Tom Paine, writing an essay in 1805 about the *Origin of Freemasonry,* argued that the Masons were descended from the Druids and mentioned a society of Dublin Masons who had taken the name of that enigmatic priesthood.[125] The chief exponent of Bardism was the Reverend John Williams, known as "Williams ab Ithel," the perpetual curate of Nerquis, whose chief exposition of his creed carries a fulsome dedication to no fewer than four bishops.[126]

There were other varieties of Druidism, such as that of "Morien," in the later 19th century. By most standards Morien, whose real name was Owen Morgan, would be judged insane. His amazing jumble of earlier ideas about Druidism being the original religion of the world was combined with a cloudy interpretation of Scripture in which Christ's baptism in the Jordan could be seen as the "lustration of the nation by the agency of holy dew." With wrinkled brows the reader presses on, to discover that the Druids used the Egg as a symbol of the earth—oh, yes, thinks the occultist, so do others, like the Theosophical Society—but there are few who would not quail at being told that the Druids used to "*wear the Egg as a symbol of Ced, the sun's mother, in the form of a coracle.*"[127] Such eccentrics are attracted by every occult group. But the influence of such a seemingly mad doctrine as Druidism has been oddly pervasive among modern occultists. Father Ignatius of Llanthony was infected, after being initiated into the Gorsedd of the Bards of Wales, and he began to consider himself as a member of an indefinite and incalculably ancient Welsh church.[128] And in Péladan's Rose-Croix Catholique, Albert Journet had contrived to prove that there was a French Cabala as much as a Hebrew one; while Victor-Emile Michelet decided that the Druids must have had the managing of it.[129]

The same scrambling of Traditional elements with the

concerns of current scholarship lies behind the occult obsession with the Great Pyramid. The responsibility for this mania belongs to John Taylor (1781-1864). Taylor, who was bookseller to London University, had an incurable taste for Scriptural interpretation; and among such no-doubt standard works as Dr. Muspratt's *Plattner on the Blowpipe,* he carried in his list a selection of titles on Animal Magnetism.[130] His other obsessions were "advising" astronomers how to go about their business; the study of Greek Emphasis, in order to discover exactly on what passages Jesus had placed emphasis in the Greek Testament; and a preoccupation with weights and measures. In 1859, he published *The Great Pyramid,* the fruit of thirty years of labor. Noah, it appeared, had probably built the Pyramid. The Scripture tells us that he was "a preacher of righteousness." Therefore, what more likely than that he should establish a perfect system of weights and measures for all mankind? This system, argued Taylor, was based on the circumference of the earth, and was embodied in the proportions of the Great Pyramid.[131]

Taylor's words somehow kindled the heart of the Astronomer-Royal for Scotland, Professor C. Piazzi Smyth, who rushed out to Egypt to survey the Pyramid and to compare his findings with Taylor's calculations. These he confirmed in almost every detail. The Pyramid was a meteorological observatory for the whole world, placed in Egypt as part of the Divine Plan. He wrote to Taylor: "The *Cause* is the grand object; and if in any manner we are able while on earth *to vindicate the ways of God to man*—we have not lived in vain."[132]

The Royal Society thought otherwise. It allowed a General of the Royal Engineers to attack Piazzi Smyth in its *Proceedings,* and refused the Astronomer Royal for Scotland the right to reply. Piazzi Smyth, suspecting a personal slight, resigned, with loud demands that his reasons be placed before the whole Society. In 1874 he published a pamphlet accusing the Executive of concealing the facts from the Fellows. The Pyramid, he maintained, was "the

highest and holiest subject that can ever occupy a scientific society."[133] This cannot have helped his case. As for his theories, they gravitated to the occultists. In 1885 a certain Brother Thomas Holland, acknowledging his debt to Piazzi Smyth, was giving lectures in Masonic Lodges connecting Freemasonry with the Master Builder of the Pyramid. When published, these lectures included a table tracing Queen Victoria's descent to Adam.[134] In America, Joseph Seiss gave up preaching the Millennium—which he had expected in 1870—to spread the glad news in his *Miracle in Stone*.[135]

The rejection of the learned astronomer Piazzi Smyth by the Royal Society had delivered the Pyramid to the forces of unreason.

Under this pile of discarded theories was the rock of the old Traditions. When the lost or the rebellious of the 19th century were foundering for lack of a creed, the Traditions, with or without their modern accretions, were to hand as they had been in the Renaissance. It was possible to come into contact with the Traditions in so many ways. The seeker might find them in whole, in part, or in many differing combinations. He might discover novel doctrines without the basis of the historical Traditions; or he might possess the attitude of Traditionalists without ever knowing of the doctrine. If the 19th-century *poète maudit* adopted Gnostic attitudes, Péladan resurrected the Christian version of Neo-Platonism as professed by Ficino.[136] Socially rejected, the seeker might make contact with occult circles. He might discover their sources in pre-Christian religion. Or he could compile his own syncretism from the bewildering variety of doctrines available.

We have done with Traditional theology. But to explain how the occult Traditions came once more to the surface in the 19th century—in what manner they were appropriated—and how politics became inextricably linked with certain forms of occultism—we shall have to travel to Poland.

Of no chapter am I so fully aware of its deficiencies as I am of this: I cannot hope to have avoided mistakes in trying to describe the accumulation of occult "Tradition" throughout European history. Simplification has been inevitable; and detail sacrificed to the need to sketch that broad outline without which no understanding at all of the occult can be attained.

1. In China, for example, where the Establishment pattern was absolute and endured for centuries upon centuries, the factor of isolation combined with an authoritarian society to prevent the growing up of any significant opposition.

2. And hence still occult. But see my forthcoming volume, *The Occult Establishment.*

3. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1951), pp. 244-6. Professor Dodds also invokes Erich Fromm in his analysis of this period: it is worth noting that my own ideas had been formed before I read *The Greeks and the Irrational,* solely on the basis of the 19th- and 20th-century evidence. But it is almost superfluous to say how much the insights of Professor Dodds into his own period have extended my vision.

4. Wilhelm Koppers, "Zum Ursprung des Mysterienwesens in Lichte von Völkerkunde and Indologie," in *Eranosjahrbuch XI,* 1944—*Die Mysterien* (Zürich, 1945), p. 264.

5. Walter Wili, *The Orphic Mysteries and the Greek Spirit* (1944), in *The Mysteries,* papers from the *Eranos Yearbooks,* ed. Joseph Campbell (London, 1955). Contains English translations of most of the papers from the 1944 symposium, cited above.

6. Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational,* pp. 76-7.

7. See, e.g., Hymns XLIV and XLVI to different aspects of Dionysos, in Thomas Taylor's translation of 1787, reprinted by Kathleen Raine and G. M. Harper, *Thomas Taylor the Platonist* (London, 1969), pp. 258-9, Taylor's Hymn XLVI ends,

> Come mighty Bacchus to these rites inclin'd,
> And bless thy suppliants with rejoicing mind.

8. Walter F. Otto, "The Meaning of the Eleusinian Mysteries" (1939), in *The Mysteries,* pp. 23-31. There is, I suspect, a strong body of scholarly opinion which would reject anything which Otto has written about the Mystery cults—it is all the more interesting to study this point of view in order to ap-

preciate *what has been made* of the Mysteries. Cf. also Otto's *Dionysius, Myth and Cult*, tr. R. B. Palmer (London, 1965). Otto suggests as the goal of the Mysteries not a "mystical union," but an entry into what Micrea Eliade has called "Mythic Time." (See his *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, London, 1955.)

9. Paul Schmitt, "The Ancient Mysteries in the Society of their time. . ." (1944), in *The Mysteries*, pp. 107-8.

10. R. C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (London, 1961), pp. 99 and 143.

11. Franz Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, tr. T. J. McCormack (London, 1903), pp. 83-4 and 87 ff.

12. Cumont, *Mysteries of Mithra*, pp. 155-61. In origin, thinks Cumont, the murder was real.

13. Cumont, *Mysteries of Mithra*, pp. 105-25.

14. Cumont, *Mysteries of Mithra*, p. 149.

15. P. Boyance, "Sur l'abais de héraclide le pontique," in *Etudes anciennes*, 36 (1934), p. 351: "C'est au lendemain même dc la mort de Platon que commence le Néo-Platonisme."

16. E. R. Dodds, *Select Passages Illustrating Neoplatonism* (London, 1923), pp. 7-8.

17. A simplification of the simplification of Philip Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (2nd edition, revised, The Hague, 1960), p. 1 note.

18. Manilius' *Astronomics*, quoted Christopher McIntosh, *The Astrologers and Their Creed* (London, 1969), p. 37.

19. Plotinus, *Enneads, iv, iv, 40, 41*, quoted and tr. Dodds, *Select Passages*, p. 114.

20. A. J. Festugière, *La Revélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* (Paris, 1944-54), vol. I, p. 355. See also his *Hermétisme et mystique paienne* (Paris, 1967), pp. 28-87, for a helpful summary of his own work.

21. Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (revised edition, Boston, 1963), pp. 31-7.

22. Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, pp. 42-7; see also pp. 49-91 and pp. 250-53.

23. Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, pp. 86-8.

24. Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, p. 288.

25. Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, pp. 240-44.

26. See J. R. Palanque in *The Church in the Christian Roman Empire*, by Palanque and others, tr. Ernest C. Messenger (London, 1949), vol. I, pp. 65 ff.; vol II, pp. 703-9.

27. Cumont, *Mysteries of Mithra*, pp. 200-208. Cf. also the interesting if ill-written work of Esmé Wynne-Tyson, *Mithras, the Fellow in the Cap* (London, 1958), in which, from an "occult" viewpoint, the author tries to demonstrate that the original form of Christianity was in fact totally corrupted by Mithraic practice.

28. Dodds, *Select Passages*, p. 8, quoting Eumapius, *Vita Maximi*.

29. Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, pp. 284 ff.

30. Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, p. 263, note 70. Cf. Chapter 4 for Joseph Smith and the treasure-hunters.

31. See Franz Cumont, *The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* (Chicago, 1911).

32. Festugière, *La Révélation*, vol. I, pp. 21-4.

33. E. G. Guenon, *Hindu Doctrines*, pp. 49-51.

34. On Pythagoras, see J. A. Philip, *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism* (Toronto, 1966), and C. J. Vogel, *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism* (Assen, Netherlands, 1966).

35. G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, 1957), p. 226.

36. Cumont, *Oriental Religions*, p. 21.

37. Walter Ullmann, *Principles of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages* (2nd edition, London, 1966), p. 109.

38. Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages* (2nd edition, London, 1966), p. 43.

39. Ullmann, *Principles of Government and Politics*, pp. 118-19 et seq.

40. Gordon Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages* (Manchester, 1967), vol. I, pp. 10-11.

41. Leff, *Heresy*, pp. 1-11.

42. H. C. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages* (2nd edition, New York and London, 1906), vol. III, pp. 183-8.

43. Lea, *History of the Inquisition*, for Templars, pp. 238 ff.; and for Joan, pp. 357 ff.

44. See Lea, *History of the Inquisition*, pp. 264 ff. for dismissal of occultist claims that the Templars were in fact a Gnostic sect. For a typically occultist picture of Joan, see Margaret Murray, *The Witch-cult in Western Europe* (paperback edition, Oxford, 1962), pp. 271-6. For a similar interpretation of the Stedingers, see G. B. Gardner, *The Meaning of Witchcraft* (London, 1959), pp. 266-8. These two authors have at least seen that

Joan and the Stedingers were destroyed because they were opposed to "right order" as defined by the Powers That Were. This alone is sufficient to make them *ex officio* part of occult Tradition. It is only fair to say that neither Murray nor Gardner attempts to link their heroes with the mainstream of occult Tradition that I describe. Their connecting link is Margaret Murray's witch-cult, a supposed Underground of popular paganism surviving beneath the superstructure of Christianity. It is easy to see that such a concept is equivalent to the historical Traditions, and just barely possible that a residue of truth remains under a welter of misguided fanaticism.

45. Steven Runciman, *The Mediaeval Manichee* (Cambridge, 1947), pp. 117-18 and p. 124.

46. Runciman, *Mediaeval Manichee*, pp. 149-64.

47. Runciman, *Mediaeval Manichee*, pp. 145-6. Cf. his Appendix IV, pp. 186-7, "Dualism, Buddhism and Occultism," which is based on a wrong impression of what "occultist" is—he takes it to be a much stricter form of belief than in fact has ever been. His own tentative suggestion of a possible Cathar origin for the Tarot pack is an interesting comment on the unconsciously occultist attitude into which even academics may often slip. (Cf. Wynn-Tyson, *Mithras*, p. 187, for the suggestion of a Mithraic origin for the Tarot). The occult being rejected knowledge, it gathers to it all rejected thought. However, for the undoubted connections between the Cabala, Gnosticism, and Catharist Languedoc, see this chapter.

19th-century occultists speculated that the Tarot pack was probably connected with the Cabala—now even Sir Steven admits the existence of a "debased form" of Cabalistic symbolism in the cards.

48. Leff, *Heresy*, vol. I, p. 293.

49. Quoted Leff, *Heresy*, p. 402.

50. Leff, *Heresy*, pp. 312-13.

51. Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 151.

52. Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London, 1955), p. 541.

53. David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (London, 1963). See pp. 4-15 for a discussion of this opposition and its relationship to medieval thought.

54. The main channels of transmission were from Plotinus's master, Ammonius Saccas—who had been a Christian before he

turned philosopher—through Origen; from Plotinus through St. Augustine; and from Proclus through several pseudo-epigraphic works, in particular the possibly Gnostic pseudo-Dionysius with its angel- and demon-ologies. Dodds, *Select Passages*, p. 23; see also text below.

55. Gordon Leff, *Medieval Thought* (London, 1962), p. 171.

56. Knowles, *Medieval Thought*, pp. 194-205.

57. Raymond Klibansky, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages* (London, 1939), pp. 17-18.

58. Leff, *Heresy*, vol. I, p. 174.

59. Klibansky, *Platonic Tradition*, p. 33, where he cites as an example of this the treatise *Asclepius*, which formed part of the *Hermetica*.

60. For the psychological conditions of this "flight to Protestantism," see Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*, pp. 52-3 and pp. 85-8, although the historical analysis is poor. For the changing idea of the individual, see Walter Ullmann, *The Individual and Society in the Middle Ages* (London, 1967), pp. 123 ff. It is interesting to note in passing that Calvin's theory that those destined to salvation would "know" of this and thus be numbered among the elect, is a fair approximation of Gnostic doctrine and had to some extent been anticipated by the heresy of the Free Spirit.

61. H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze of the 16th and 17th Centuries* (paperback edition, London, 1969). Despite the fact that I disagree with its conclusion, his work is to be recommended as the only sensible analysis of the problem.

62. Trevor-Roper, *European Witch-Craze*, pp. 24-39 and pp. 112-4.

63. Trevor-Roper, *European Witch-Craze*, pp. 53-4.

64. Lea, *History of the Inquisition*, vol. I, pp. 236-7.

65. Lea, *History of the Inquisition*, p. 335.

66. Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (6 vols., London and New York, 1923-41), vol. IV (New York, 1934), pp. 524-5.

67. Thorndike, *History of Magic*, vol. I (London, 1923), pp. 525-44.

68. T. O. Wedel, *The Mediaeval Attitude toward Astrology* (reprint, New York, 1960, of original 1920 edition), pp. 68-78; and D. C. Allen, *The Star-Crossed Renaissance* (New York, 1966). Allen records (pp. 78-9) the 13th-century court astrologer, Guido

Bonatti, whose employer was the Count of Montefeltro. Bonatti would ensure victory in battle by taking sightings on the stars, signalling from the *campanile* the propitious minute to arm, to mount, and to ride off to the wars.

69. Festugière, *Revelation*, vol. I, p. 219. Cf. view of C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, tr. R. F. C. Hill (London, 1953), pp. 20-21, quoting J. Evola, *La Tradizzione Ermetica* (Bari, 1931): "Each physical perception has simultaneously a psychic component which animated it."

70. For a good account of the alchemical process, see Richard Cavendish, *The Black Arts* (paperback edition, London, 1969), pp. 180 ff.; but cf. Titus Burckhardt, *Alchemy* (London, 1967), pp. 182 ff.

71. Thorndike, *History of Magic*, vol. III (New York, 1934), p. 42.

72. Thorndike, *History of Magic*, Vol. III, pp. 31-51. Thorndike casts doubt upon the authenticity of John's decretal.

73. E. M. Butler, *Ritual Magic* (Cambridge, 1949), pp. 31-5.

74. Butler, *Ritual Magic*, p. 29.

75. Butler, *Ritual Magic*, pp. 89-90.

76. E.g. Gerschom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (London, 1955), pp. 73-9.

77. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 156-283, for a scholarly discussion of the *Zohar*, its authorship and doctrine. For an explanation from the point of view of an Anglican clergyman of how the Sefiroth are used by occultists, see A. D. Duncan, *The Christ, Psychology and Magic* (London, 1970).

78. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 242-3.

79. Ernst Benz, *Die Christliche Kabbala* (Zürich, 1958), p. 11. The pious Enoch was raised to heaven under the name of "Metatron" and the Hebrew *Book of Enoch* describes the celestial hierarchy he finds there. This anatomy of spirits was pounced on by ritual magicians, who made increasing use of Cabalistic theory. The precise connection of the name of Enoch with the "angelic language," Enochian, discovered by Dr. Dee and Edward Kelly, remains obscure. There exists a system of Enochian magic based on Kelly's "scryings." See Peter French, *John Dee* (London, 1968).

80. J. L. Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance* (New York, 1944), p. 15.

81. Allen, *Star-Crossed Renaissance*, pp. 51-2.

82. Burckhardt, *Alchemy*, pp. 19-20.

83. By Sigismondo Malatesta. Klibansky, *Platonic Tradition*, p. 21.

84. Paul O. Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, tr. V. Conant (New York, 1943), p. 15.

85. Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London, 1964), p. 12.

86. Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, pp. 169-76.

87. Kristeller, *Ficino*, p. 24.

88. Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, p. 114.

89. Blau, *Christian Interpretation*, pp. 20-25.

90. Blau, *Christian Interpretation*, pp. 41-64. He combined it with "Pythagorean" number symbolism.

91. Francois Secret, *Le Zohar chez les Kabbalistes chrétiennes de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1964), p. 10. Essential to supplement Blau.

92. Charles G. Nauert, Jr. *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought* (Urbana, Ill., 1965), pp. 157 ff.

93. D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London, 1958), p. 51.

94. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, pp. 126-8.

95. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, p. 70. Ludovico Lazarelli, author of the *Crater Hermetis*, who had been initiated by Mercurius, took the name of "Enoch." (Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, new edition, London, 1968, p. 15.)

96. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, pp. 205-7 et seq. for Campanella. See also below, Chapter 9.

97. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries*, passim.

98. For Agrippa, see Nauert, *Agrippa;* for Dee, see French, *John Dee;* most lives of Paracelsus are by occultists and to be avoided; however, see R.-H Blaser, *Paracelsus et sa conception de la nature* (Lille/Geneva, 1950), and for his influence on the field of medicine, Gerhard Eis, *Vor und nach Paracelsus* (Stuttgart, 1965), esp. pp. 136 ff.

99. Hiram Haydn, *The Counter-Renaissance* (New York, 1950).

100. Thorndike, *History of Magic*, vol. V (New York, 1941), p. 627

101. Constantin Bila, *La croyance à la magie au XVIII siècle en France* (Paris, 1925), pp. 83-7.

102. Cf. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 217. Alchemy

proper was still practiced at the end of the 19th century—see Chapter 7 below—and I do not believe that it has ever died out completely. For Boehme, see J. J. Stoudt, *Sunrise to Eternity* (Philadelphia, 1957). Boehme's *Aurora* was published in 1612.

103. René Le Forestier, *La Franc-maçonnerie templière et occultiste aux XVIII et XIX siècles*, with addenda by Antoine Faivre (Paris/Louvain, 1970), pp. 27-31. Anderson's style of "history" would seem to have aped that of an earlier school, e.g. that of Camden's *Brittania*.

104. Le Forestier, *La Franc-maçonnerie templière*, pp. 32-4. The original "Eugenius Philalethes" was the alchemist Thomas Vaughan (1622-66), the supposed progenitor of Léo Taxil's "Diana Vaughan."

105. Le Forestier, *La Franc-maçonnerie templière*, pp. 44 ff.

106. Auguste Viatte, *Les Sources occultes du Romantisme*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1928). For Martinès de Pasqually, see vol. I, pp. 46 ff.; for Willermoz, pp. 64-5 and pp. 139 ff.; for Saint-Martin, pp. 67-70. There is a persistent rumor—which Viatte ridicules—that Martinès de Pasqually was a converted Italian or Spanish Jew (p. 47): the occultist's denunciations of the Jewish way of life as dark and evil are in no way incompatible with the zeal of a convert. In view of the part played by Jewish converts in the history of the Secret Traditions, there seems every reason to treat the rumor as significant.

107. See Raine and Harper, *Thomas Taylor*, for Kathleen Raine's essay, pp. 3-48, on Thomas Taylor in England, and George Mills Harper's, pp. 49-102, on Taylor in America. They also print biographical accounts of Taylor, pp. 105-34. For Blake, see Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, 2 vols. (London, 1969).

108. Schwab, *La renaissance orientale*, p. 174.

109. Quoted S. N. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 78.

110. Cf. Gerschom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, tr. R. Manheim (London, 1965), p. 8.

111. Odhmer Sigsdedt, *Swedenborg*, pp. 178-9.

112. For Hahnemann, see Richard Haehl, *Samuel Hahnemann* (London, 1931), and generally on homoeopathy, Otto Leeser, *The Contribution of Homoeopathy to the development of Medicine* (High Wycombe, 1969).

113. For Reichenbach, see F. D. O'Byrne (ed.), *Reichenbach's Letters on Od and Magnetism* (London, 1926). These are Reichenbach's letters of 1852.

114. Haehl, *Hahnemann*, pp. 273-4. Hahnemann was enraged by attempts to attribute his inspiration to Paracelsus.

115. See E. G. Boring, Introduction to Fechner's *Elements of Psychophysics*, vol. I (New York, 1960).

116. For Fechner, see Boring, *Psychophysics;* also Walter Lowrie, *The Religion of a Scientist* (New York, 1946), and William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (London, 1909), pp. 133-77.

117. Quoted, O'Byrne, *Reichenbach's Letters*, p. 35.

118. The London Library, founded in 1841 by Thomas Carlyle and others, still preserves the classification "Occult Science" in the scientific section.

119. A. L. Owen, *The Famous Druids* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 28-30. I have followed Owen's unmatchable account of the growth of the Druidical myth in England.

120. Owen, *Famous Druids*, pp. 35-47.

121. Owen, *Famous Druids*, pp. 50-57.

122. Owen, *Famous Druids*, pp. 182 ff.

123. Owen, *Famous Druids*, pp. 118-20; for influence of Stukeley on Blake, see Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, vol. II, pp. 236-8, and cf. Owen, *Famous Druids*, pp. 232 ff.

124. James Bonwick, *Irish Druids and Old Irish Religions* (London, 1894), p. 63.

125. Koch, *Republican Religion*, pp, 118-19 and p. 119, note 9.

126. Williams ab Ithel, *The Ecclesiastical Antiquities of the Cymry* (London, 1844).

127. Morien, *The Royal Winged Son of Stonehenge and Avebury* (Pontypridd and London, 1900), pp. 248-58. The coracle is then equated with Noah's Ark: this *does* have an obscure connection with "Druidism," as it was often argued that the Ark landed not on Ararat but Snowden, and that the primordial priesthood of the Druids descended from Noah.

128. Anson, *The Call of the Cloister*, pp. 66-7.

129. Michelet, *Les compagnons*, pp. 93-4.

130. Edmund Blunden, *Keat's Publisher, John Taylor* (London, 1936), p. 219.

131. John Taylor, *The Great Pyramid* (London, 1859), p. 228.

132. C. Piazzi Smyth, *Our Inheritance in the Great Pyramid* (London, 1864), p. iii, and see passim for his elaboration of Taylor's theories. Might there have been some connection between this Astronomer Royal for Scotland and a later Scottish

astronomer involved in the magical activities of the Golden Dawn?

133. C. Piazzi Smyth, *The Great Pyramid and the Royal Society* (London, 1874), pp. 3-4.

134. Bro. Thomas Holland, *Freemasonry from the Great Pyramid of Ancient Times* (London, 1885).

135. Joseph A. Seiss, *The Last Times and the Great Consummation* (Philadelphia, 1863), p. 362. Basil Stewart, *History and Significance of the Great Pyramid* (London, 1935), p. 16.

136. Orléac, *Les cahiers d'Hermès*, p. 216: he notes that Péladan mentions Flaxman (1755-1828) at whose house Thomas Taylor, the Platonist, lectured.

Chapter 7
An Anatomy of Souls

THE liberal press of 19th-century Europe found a common rallying cry in the misfortunes of Poland. This much partitioned country had, after the Congress of Vienna, been divided among Russia, Prussia, and Austria—an outrageous example of the amoral use of their position of strength by the Great Powers. Opponents of autocracy, Romantics, nationalists of all sorts, discovered in this Polish cause that most satisfactory of liberal strong-points, the morally unassailable position from

which it is impossible to sally forth in the face of territory occupied completely by the enemy. The Polish revolution of 1830-31 provided Western Europe with witnesses to the national tragedy. The rank-and-file of the defeated Polish army had been turned back into Poland by the Prussian authorities, but about 12,000 Poles of the official classes had been permitted to pass through Germany and to into exile in France. Although the French government was reluctant to grant permits of residence for Paris, the refugees were annually voted stipends according to the ranks they had held in Poland;[1] which chivalrous gesture met with a general approval that in some opinions bordered on "Polomania."[2] In Paris itself the main Polish colony established itself on the Isle St. Louis, around the residence of the leader of the conservative party among the exiles, Prince Adam Czartoryski.[3]

Together with their political opinions, the Polish exiles brought with them their national tradition of mystical philosophy, a condition aggravated by their dismal lot. The Polish reputation for mysticism was such that when toward the end of the century Leon Bloy was searching for an epithet with which to vilify his pet hate Sar Péladan, the Catholic Magus was described as a "mumbo-jumboing lacky of some fantastic Poland."[4] From German Romanticism, from their Catholic inheritance, and the proximity of Poland to half-Oriental Russia, the Poles drew the most obvious sources of their inspiration. Czartoryski himself was an Orientalist, and a friend of the founder of the Asiatick Society, Sir William Jones.[5] The great mystical poet, Julius Slowacki (1809-49), combined in his thought Traditional doctrines, from Western thinkers like Boehme, Swedenborg, Saint-Martin and Novalis,[6] with Hindu and Buddhist teachings, probably derived from Schlegel's *The Language and Wisdom of the Hindus*, and his own researches into the Mongols.[7] Slowacki travelled through Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, spending a whole night in vigil at the Holy Sepulchre, an experience which profoundly affected him.[8] He chose to explain the misfortunes of Poland by the doc-

trine of *karma*. Present sufferings were to repay a particularly hideous massacre perpetrated by Poles in the Dark Ages.[9]

Other Polish thinkers of the exile betray a similar affection for Tradition or the Orient. Bronislaw Trentowski, who published in 1837 what he believed to be the ultimate system of knowledge,[10] was a leading Freemason.[11] Count August Cieszkowski, who founded with the French historian, Jules Michelet, the *Philosophische Gesellschaft* of Berlin in 1842, professed a theory of historic cycles which he called "historiosophy," and enabled him to predict the supreme destiny of the Slavs in the new era to come.[12] He was another certainly influenced by Oriental doctrines, and developed for himself a theory of *karma* and reincarnation.[13] His friend, the poet Krasinski, remained closer to Catholic orthodoxy than most of the famous émigrés; yet he fought a running battle in his conscience with the sort of Romantic pantheism of which the most famous exponent is Wordsworth.[14] This intense susceptibility to mystical and Traditional interpretations of life found its chief expression in the belief known as "Polish Messianism," in which the Polish nation was confused both with the figure of Christ and the historical sufferings of the Jewish people dispersed throughout the world. The perpetual misfortunes of the Poles were seen as a counterpart to those of the scattered tribes of Israel, forever denied the right to exist as a free nation. Nonetheless, they were the chosen race. To justify the immense national run of bad luck it was argued that Poland was the Christ among peoples. Just as Christ's suffering had redeemed the human race, so Poland, by hers, would redeem all nations. This attitude is found even in the official pronouncements of the Polish revolutionaries; and during the uprising of 1830-31 Messianism even penetrated the battle lines. In the Polish ranks at the battle of Grochow were seen standards in Russian informing the enemy that the rebels fought "for your freedom and ours."[15]

Such visions of the apocalypse found a ready welcome in mystical circles in France, particularly among the more

romantic socialists.[16] But it was the Polish tragedy to be condemned to political impotence. The émigrés made several attempts to reopen the war against the partitioning powers. But these were mostly forlorn hopes, like the expedition of 1833 in which a bare hundred exiles crossed the French frontier on the report of a revolution in Germany. Far from turning trouble to their advantage, they found themselves trapped, forbidden to cross into Switzerland or to return to France.[17] Balked of the possibility of real political action, the Messianists had to be content with the kingdom not of this world; and consequently came into contact with the mystics of their adopted country.

But what the Poles brought with them is more important than what they found. The exiles were responsible for reintroducing to French occultism, which on their arrival was an unsystematic jumble of Mesmerism and the sham Oriental, a consciousness of the Secret Traditions. To their influence is directly attributable the fact that the Traditions, which in the West had been somewhat in decline during the Age of Reason, formed a recognized part of the underground of rejected knowledge when that underground again became a source of inspiration. Three Messianists were influential in this development: the Polish national poet, Adam Mickiewicz; his spiritual master Andrei Towianski; and the mathematician-philosopher, Hoëne-Wronski.

The story of Mickiewicz and Towianski shows quite clearly the tortuous routes by which occult and Traditional thought first became entangled with Polish nationalist aspirations, next formed an integral part of the "Messianic" doctrine, then made contact with the West. It is ironic that the essence of the Traditions should have originally been drawn into Poland and Russia from the West. The sources were Martinism and occult Masonry. In Poland the first group of occult Freemasons was founded in Warsaw c. 1750 by an exiled Austrian colonel. Polish Masonry from that date onwards preserved an increasingly occult tone, receiving the highest mystical grades from the Dresden Lodge of

the Three White Eagles. Besides Martinist doctrines, those of Swedenborg were introduced into both Russia and Poland, where they were combined in the Lodges with alchemical symbolism. One of the chief *colporteurs* of these occult teachings was Count Thadeus Grabianka, who had allowed himself to be completely convinced by "invisible agents"—and also by Pernety, King Frederick II's librarian—that he had a mystical vocation. A series of illuminations informed him that he was to be King of Poland; perhaps wisely, he elected to realize his kingdom in France, at Avignon, where he built a temple in imitation of Solomon's. Eventually he returned to Poland, but, unfortunately for his aspirations, the predestined King was forced to flee to Russia in 1803 to avoid prosecution over some shady commercial transactions.[18] In St. Petersburg he was responsible for inspiring the growth of Martinist Masonry; and the works of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, Boehme, and other Traditional writers began to circulate.[19]

In Russia the Martinists made numerous converts among the nobility and professional classes. They ran a publishing house in Moscow, and possessed a library which was said in 1851 to have been worth £40,000.[20] But the liberalism of their principles attracted the attention of the Empress Catherine II, who in her despotic old age ordered the imprisonment or banishment of the leading members of the Order. At the accession of Alexander there was a certain relaxation of official hostility to the Martinists; with the rather perplexing result that while the Emperor's visionary inclinations were sympathetic to the mystical aspects of Martinism, his position as head of an authoritarian regime could not allow the Masons to practice what they preached.[21] In 1822 the Lodges offended, and were outlawed. Like Russian Freemasonry, Polish Lodges were centers of opposition to the regime: the difference lay in the nationalist character of the Polish opposition. In the decade 1810-20, Poland saw ninety new Lodges to add to the 220 already flourishing, and a large number of these were specifically formed to work for the re-establishment of

national independence.[22] Thus occultism and nationalism came together in Polish Freemasonry, while a mystical liberalism was professed in Russian Martinist circles.

In no part of the territory absorbed by Russia was occultism so combined with nationalism as in the Lithuanian town of Wilno. Here, during the period 1820-22, a young mystagogue called Thomas Zan obtained a huge success among a student population already riddled with secret societies for his theories deriving from occult Masonry and Mesmerism. Zan's circle, known as the "Radiants," held to magical theories of correspondence, promoted the adoption of Masonic ritual among revolutionary groups, and professed a stern code of moral virtue. The triumph of the Radiants was to stage a series of revolutionary and mystical happenings, at which Zan, the Arch-Radiant, would harangue his disciples on moral rectitude and the theory of Radiation. This was followed by mutual embracing on the part of his audience, the ceremonial drinking of milk, and a day of bucolic festivity. The fervor excited by these demonstrations of brotherly love found other outlets in nationalist activities. There was in fact no conspiracy, but through a series of circumstances one appeared to the authorities to exist. There were investigations and a large number of students were imprisoned.[23] Among these were Zan himself, and Adam Mickiewicz who had been one of his closest friends.

Presumably in the hope of making a good Muscovite of the refractory Pole, the Russians deported Mickiewicz to St. Petersburg. This had no more effect than his imprisonment in keeping the young poet from the dangerous fruit of illuminism. When the students had been in prison (1823-4), Thomas Zan had undergone ecstatic visionary states which greatly impressed Mickiewicz. In St. Petersburg he fell under the influence of his fellow Pole, the artist, poet, and prophet Joseph Olesciewicz, who was during this period Grand Master of the Martinist Order in Russia, and from whom Mickiewicz learned the Cabala.[24] Thus, when he left Russia, Mickiewicz carried with him a body of Traditional

knowledge, acquired through his membership of an underground where rejected knowledge and rejected politics were one. His wanderings do not concern us until his meeting with Towianski in Paris in 1841.

Andrei Towianski was born a Lithuanian, and like Mickiewicz studied at the University of Wilno. The circles in which he moved have been described as a "mad-house." His connections with the mystical element among the students are proved by his affiliation of a society to which he belonged to a Lodge of occult Masonry.[25] But he escaped imprisonment or deportation, and calmly entered the legal profession. In 1832 he suddenly stopped practicing and travelled to St. Petersburg, where he drank deep of Martinist doctrines at the same sources as Mickiewicz.[26] From Russia he went to Dresden, the center from which Polish occult Masonry had been derived. He returned for a short while to Poland, where he conceived the idea that he had a religious mission, and was called to go West. Towianski set off for Paris, fortified by the blessing of the Archbishop of Poznan. On his way to the West he performed a curious pilgrimage—curious from the religious point of view, that is, for to the historian or the antiquary or to the casual tourist there would be nothing remarkable in such a visit—to the field of Waterloo. Here he stayed in the company of a Polish general at the farmhouse where Napoleon had slept the night before the battle. His musings on the tragedy of Waterloo became the first text of his cult, *Biesada*, or *The Banquet*. The figure of Napoleon plays a considerable part in Polish Messianism—at first sight perhaps because the Emperor had been the only European head of state within living memory to take any notice of Polish claims for independence. Even the puppet Grand Duchy of Warsaw had been less wounding to Polish self-esteem than partition. Zan, the Arch-Radiant, venerated Napoleon. Mickiewicz in his student days had added the name Napoleon to his own, signing himself Adam-Napoleon. In 1822 the rumor had run among the students at Wilno that the Emperor was not dead, but would

reappear as the Redeemer. Even in Russia, groups in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other cities paid reverence to the spirit of Napoleon: for them Waterloo had been the Good Friday of France, and France was the Christ-People.[27] The similarity with Polish ideas about Poland as the Christ-People is obvious; and the correspondences between Polish doctrines and those of certain mystical sects in France will be seen to be equally marked. For the moment we shall leave Towianski on the scene of his hero's Crucifixion and call to mind another element in the thought of the Polish exiles.

If Martinist ideas were reimported by the Poles into France, there was carried with them another sort of mysticism which smacked more powerfully of the Traditions. This was the Cabala.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, Central European Jewry generally, and Polish Jewry in particular, underwent a series of convulsions. The first concerned the doctrine of the self-proclaimed Messiah, Sabbatai Zevi (1625-75), whose followers preached a new interpretation of the Cabala for a coming new age. One of the most important strongholds of Sabbatianism was Lithuania; one of the most active Sabbatian preachers flourished in Wilno itself.[28] Now, the crucial importance of Sabbatianism is that its Messiah apostasized—became in fact a convert to Islam. There then arose a powerful school of thought which justified apostasy on the grounds that, although the essential purity of the true Cabala could not be harmed, the appearances must be spat upon; and that apostasy was therefore a virtue. This idea of what Professor Scholem calls "the holiness of sin"[29] is a variation on the theories we have observed in some sorts of Gnostic: that the world and its appearances can and indeed *must* be treated with complete disregard, that the adept is free to do anything he chooses. Twice large groups of Sabbatians apostasized from the Jewish faith in the belief that to do so was the only way to salvation. The second time this organized desertion occurred was in 1759 in the East Galician district of Poland,

when the Sabbatian prophet, Jacob Frank, led his followers in a body into the Catholic Church.[30] There thus existed a "fifth column" within the ranks of Polish Catholicism, whose mystical object in joining the Catholic Church had been largely to demean themselves in the eyes of the world, and whose interior spiritual traditions were wholly other—Jewish, Cabalistic, and in all things Traditional.

Before the death of Jacob Frank in 1791 there had appeared in the areas of Russia and Poland where Sabbatianism was strongest yet another Jewish revivalist movement known as Hassidism. Its founder, the mystic Israel Baal Shem, was responsible for placing the emphasis on an interpretation of the popular elements in the Cabala in an attempt to make of Jewish Tradition a mass movement. In this his followers were largely successful; and during the great age of Hasidism (1760-1810) the new popular Cabalism registered substantial successes even in the face of the strictly orthodox Judaism of the Lithuanian Rabbis.[31] Thus, in addition to the presence of large numbers of converted Frankists, Polish mysticism was augmented by a popular Cabalistic revival, which may well have rendered the often abstruse doctrines of the Jewish mystical philosophers more intelligible to a Gentile. Judaeo-Christian sects sprang up throughout Poland and Russia, with rituals based on esoteric doctrine—and, most significantly, worshipping a Napoleon-Messiah.[32] There can be no doubt that this turn in the affairs of Polish Jewry was to a large extent responsible for the theories of Polish Messianism.

The impetus given to the comparison of the Polish nation with the Jews which formed the backbone of Messianic theory is confirmed by the continued emphasis placed by the Poles upon Israel itself. The radical group among the Polish exiles in 1832 addressed an appeal to the Jews containing a promise to help them found their own nation in Palestine.[33] The careers of Mickiewicz and Towianski add further weight to this point. The national poet of Poland, ran the rumor among the exiles, had a Jewish mother who was converted just before her marriage. It seems that

Mickiewicz's maternal grandparents may actually have been followers of Jacob Frank; and it is fairly certain that this wife, Celina, whom he met in Moscow while in exile, was the daughter of converted Frankist parents.[34] Towianski had several Jewish friends while at Wilno University, and at least one of his circle was involved in the Bible Society of Wilno, which exerted itself to convert the Polish Jews.[35] Among the mystical group established by himself and Mickiewicz in Paris, one of the most active members was the Jewish Xavière Deybel, whom Towianski called "the Jewish Princess."[36] Mickiewicz and Towianski exerted themselves in the cause of the Jewish national home: an undertaking which, in view of the equally hopeless situation of the Poles, might seem to indicate a curious order of priorities. A converted Jew from Wilno, Gerschom Rom, acted as their emissary to Amschel de Rothschild; for some time they entertained hopes of converting him to the support of Zionism.[37] Mickiewicz's last act before he died in Istanbul in 1855 was to attempt to form a Jewish Legion to fight in the Crimean War.[38] Examples from the teaching of Mickiewicz and Towianski could be multiplied to show their exaltation of the role of Israel even above that of Poland; but we must return to follow Towianski from the field of Waterloo.

From Waterloo, the prophet proceeded to Paris. In July 1841 he had a long interview with Mickiewicz, by now eminent in émigré circles and in the world of letters for his part in preserving Polish national traditions in the hour of their defeat. What now happened is uncertain, but Towianski seems to have arrested the mental illness of Celina Mickiewicz with a form of mesmerism; and, either by the effect of this cure or by the impact of his personality, converted the great Polish poet with remarkable suddenness to a belief in his divine mission. In September, Towianski was introduced to the exiles at a service in Notre Dame where his preaching so alarmed the Archbishop of Paris that he informed the Prefect of Police and alerted his clergy against the Polish prophet. While the wheels of officialdom turned

slowly to effect the expulsion of Towianski, he organized with Mickiewicz the circle of the *Oeuvre de Dieu*, which met daily and for some time included the poet Julius Slowacki. But in July, 1842, the Master of the *Oeuvre de Dieu* was finally expelled from France, and Towianski had subsequently to content himself with directing the circle through Mickiewicz from afar.[39] The prophet led a troubled life after his departure from France. He was expelled from Rome by the papal police, expelled from Lausanne and Spoletto, and eventually he made his home in Zürich. His sole attempt to re-enter France was during the revolution of 1848, when he was denounced as a public agitator after scarcely a week in Paris and was sentenced to be deported to Cayenne. From this terrible fate the influence of Mickiewicz saved him and he was allowed to return to Switzerland where he resumed his function of a director of souls.[40]

It was through the *Oeuvre de Dieu*, directed by Mickiewicz, and through the personal influence of the poet while occupying the Chair of Slavonic Literature in Paris, that Towianski's brand of Messianism became known in the West. It comes as something of a shock after this journey into Central Europe to discover the close connection which established itself between the *Oeuvre de Dieu* and the *Oeuvre de Miséricorde*, between the Poles and the Normans, between Towianski and Vintras. At the period of the prophet's expulsion from France, a dual approach was made to the Poles by the *Oeuvre de Miséricorde*. The Abbé Charvoz came to Mickiewicz in Paris, and three Vintrasians tracked Towianski down in Brussels which he had made his first stopping-place in exile. Mickiewicz wrote to Towianski expressing qualified approval of what he had been told of Eugène Vintras, and advising his Master that a union might be fruitful. Towianski so impressed his Vintrasian deputation that their report caused the Norman prophet to hail the Pole as the Messiah. Towianski certified the French sect as of good provenance and accepted Vintras as a "brother." The followers of the two cults exchanged visits, Poles

journeying to Tilly and the Vintrasian Charvoz spreading the doctrines of Towianski. From the *Oeuvre de Miséricorde* Mickiewicz borrowed the idea of establishing his own group in sections of seven. The two cults had by coincidence adopted the same white cross without the figure of Christ Crucified.[41] The political possibilities of this rapprochement will be discussed later; that there was no extensive contact with Vintras himself is because 1842, the year of these events, was also that of Vintras's imprisonment, after which the prophet of Tilly left France for England.

But the connection between the Poles and the *Oeuvre de Miséricorde* did not end with Vintras's death. The Abbé Boullan, Vintras's self-proclaimed successor, numbered among his small following some Polish believers. After his death—whether from "the fluids" or angina pectoris—in 1893, these followers returned to Poland where they were influential in the early days of the successful Mariavite Church. This body owes its origin to the visions of a poor seamstress, Maria Kozlowska, who felt herself called (in the year of Boullan's death) to establish a mixed order of men and women dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The movement grew extraordinarily fast and, by the time of its excommunication in 1906, numbered 500,000. The church which developed from the Mariavite Order preached a Polish Messianism very like that of Mickiewicz and Towianski; but it was condemned for practicing sexual rites in the manner of Boullan.[42] It is impossible to work out precisely who was influencing whom. If it is likely that the sexual mysticism of Boullan was brought into Poland by the Abbé's former disciples, it is at least as likely that Boullan himself was influenced by Polish elements linked to the *Oeuvre de Miséricorde*. It is significant that at the time of his death he was trying to publish a French translation of the *Zohar*.[43]

The story does, however, show that the penetration of French occult circles by Polish mystics was a continuing process. But, while Messianism found its way naturally through the subterranean channels of rejected thought,

Adam Mickiewicz brought the philosophy into the light of day. In 1840, the College de France had created the first French Chair of Slavonic literature and Mickiewicz's inaugural lecture had been a notable event in Parisian cultural life. His courses were attended by Jules Michelet, Edgar Quinet, and George Sand. Under the influence of Towianski the lectures became increasingly the occasion for polemic. Messianism completely dominated the lectures of 1842 and 1843. Mickiewicz took as his subjects Slavonic writers of a mystical bent: Polish Messianist poets; Russians like the Cabalist Derzavin; and Karamzin, who was represented as a Martinist. As the tempo of the lectures became more and more ecstatic, the Minister of Education received reports that Mickiewicz had assumed the mantle of Towianski. The Professor of Slavonic Literature was severely warned, but persisted in his course. Members of the *Oeuvre de Dieu* would rise from his audience to bear "spontaneous" witness to the new revelation. In the last lecture he gave, Mickiewicz expounded the divine mission of Towianski, exalted Napoleon, talked of Martinism and discussed second-sight. When the lectures were summarily halted by the government, Mickiewicz was the laughing-stock of Paris.[44]

Yet, if Messianism made little appeal to the Powers That Were,[45] its impact on the Underground was very noticeable. It was from Polish sources that Alphonse Louis Constant, the famous "Eliphas Lévi," derived his knowledge of the Cabala; and Constant himself is responsible for almost single-handedly turning the Secret Traditions into a romantic mixture suitable for popular consumption. His initiator was the third member of the Messianic trio, Joseph Maria Hoëne-Wronski.

Wronski was born at Wolsztyn in Poland in 1776, the son of the court architect, Antoine Hoëne—the "Wronski" was a later addition. In the Polish rebellion of 1794 he distinguished himself during the defense of Warsaw but was later captured by the Russians, with whom he took the opportunity to enlist. In 1797 he left the Russian army with

the rank of major, to spend the next three years studying philosophy in Germany, chiefly the system of Kant. In 1800 his dormant sense of patriotism revived and he set off to join the Polish Legions then gathering in Italy under Dombrowski to free their homeland. But the patriot succumbed to the man of science and Wronski—he always said it was on the advice of Dombrowski himself—returned to scientific researches in Marseilles where he worked at the Observatory. In 1810 he married the daughter of a well-known French astronomer. By that date he had discovered the Absolute.[46]

The Absolute is the knowledge, through the human reason, of Truth. Wronski claimed that this was achieved through rational thought but, as his exposition of his thought is couched in mathematical terms, it is almost impossible for the layman to understand him. From the sum of his sense impressions a man could "create reality" in accordance with Wronski's *Law of Creation*, a mathematical expression of no meaning to someone not a mathematician and, perhaps, of little enough significance to most who are. From this Absolute, Wronski deduced innumerable projects of social reform to be accomplished by his Antinomian Union, an association of superior men who would save the world. The expected "Messianism" was not the political apocalypse of many of his fellow countrymen; still less was it the expectation of a heaven-sent Messiah such as Towianski. It could consist in one of two things—a fully accomplished Christianity, or the final union of religion and philosophy.[47]

Wronski's supporters derive his theories from his mathematical studies and the influence of Kant. But it is just as likely that they came from mystical experience and a knowledge of the Cabala. That Wronski was knowledgeable in Cabalistic matters was obvious to early commentators on his work. He also knew Boehme and was familiar with Gnostic teachings. Like more mystical Traditionalists, Wronski maintained that the goal of man was to become God-like; like other occultists, he veiled his meaning with

an impenetrable curtain of jargon. His teachings were not for the vulgar but only for those who would make the effort to penetrate his mathematics.[48] Such indications would be sufficient to place Wronski among the Traditionalists even had Eliphas Lévi not been more specific. Wronski, he wrote, wished no one to know that he was a Cabalist and studied magic.[49] Small wonder, for he had a living to earn. Wronski, soon after his marriage, was forced into penury by the withdrawal of a subsidy which the French Academy had paid him while he studied at Marseilles. The publication of his first work had been enough, embodying as it did his "Supreme Law of Algorithmy."

Wronski's devotion to his own genius was remarkable. He survived by teaching mathematics in a Montmartre school; he went about in wooden sabots; his little child died.[50] In this state, he is scarcely to be blamed for fastening on to a gullible businessman called Pierre Arson. Arson had made a fortune and was preparing to improve himself. In 1812 he met Wronski through a mutual acquaintance and was overwhelmed by the wisdom of the sage in tatters. He agreed to take a course of instruction from Wronski and was soon writing letters beginning *Très cher et précieux ami, mon maître.*[51] Eventually he agreed to subsidize the publication of Wronski's Messianic works, which were soon rolling off the presses in indigestible volumes. Wronski claimed that at this point—the Polish exile of 1831 was still some twenty years away—Prince Adam Czartoryski had invited him back to Poland as an honored citizen; and that Arson had entered into an agreement to hold all property in common with him, so great had been his fear of losing his instructor.[52] Then Arson was initiated into the secret of the Absolute. Perhaps this was less illuminating than he expected, for the businessman decided that he wanted to revoke his agreement. He published a broadside entitled *Materials towards a History of the Great Frauds of this Earth.* Wronski replied in kind and a polemical battle began, which was continued in the courts to the total discomfiture of Arson—who should have known better than to

sign a doubtful contract. Wronski for ever afterwards declared Arson to be a real incarnation of Satan; and the miserable financier at one point received from his Master the following terse communication: *Malédiction éternelle. Nice, 26 Octobre, 1817.*[53]

Throughout the affair, Arson never ceased to regard Wronski as a heaven-sent genius, and even the courts' adverse verdict did nothing to affect this point of view. During his battle of pamphleteering with Wronski he had been plagued by the attentions of a secret society—very probably a revived group of French Martinists—about whom he was never certain whether they were in league with Wronski or against him.[54] During the fracas he retired to Nice where he continued to cultivate the Absolute by founding his own religion, a humanitarian creed which entailed a belief in reincarnation.

If Wronski was out to soak Arson, it was only so that he could publish his books. His life was one long struggle to find a patron who would subsidize his work. With the departure of Arson it became necessary again to look for finance. In the hope of obtaining a reward offered by the British Board of Longitude for improvements in their system of navigation, Wronski pounced on an error in the Nautical Almanac, sent the Board his correction to their published theory of Refractions, and followed it to London where he was again soon reduced to the extremes of physical need. The Nautical Almanac incorporated his correction without payment or acknowledgement. Wronski, in his usual enthusiasm for polemic, petitioned Parliament and received the reply that "The Board cannot consent to take cognizance of a demand which is founded on the imputation of an *entire* incompetence to fill the functions which have devolved upon them by Act of Parliament."[55] Deprived of the reward which he considered, not unjustly, to be his due, Wronski wrote several letters to Sir Humphrey Davy and persuaded a clergyman, Frederic Nolan, to make a sworn deposition before the Lord Mayor as to the justice of his case. A certain "Prelate of the English

Church, the Maecenas of the clergy, and one of the first personages in the British Empire" interposed on his behalf,[56] but with the sole result that a member of the Board expressed the opinion that "in the interests of social order one must hope that the foreign savant would one night go to bed and not wake up again the next day. . . ."[57]

By now convinced that the learned world was against him and all true genius, Wronski had achieved a certain resignation as well as skill in keeping alive. In London he was so poor that his clergyman friend, when publishing his deposition before the Lord Mayor, cut out the description of Wronski's poverty as too degrading to print. It was in this period of total catastrophe that he began yet another project, one which for some time seemed to promise not merely a relief from poverty, but positive riches. This was a system for steam locomotives which he called the "dynamogenic system," and which allowed the engine to dispense with rails. Wronski is known to have invented a tracked vehicle, and it is probable that the contract he signed in 1833 with the *Messageries Générales de France* was for the prototype of this. The sum involved would have kept him comfortably for life; but Wronski's soaring mind deduced from his invention further principles of mechanics which he conceived it his duty to publish. The Company objected to Wronski publishing his secrets with the money given him to make working models, withdrew their support and stopped the presses. Undeterred, Wronski approached a M. Thayer, a member of the Departmental Council of the Seine, who financed his researches until ten years later the Minister of Works appointed a Commission to examine Wronski's project. From the fact that Wronski in 1849 was still in need of a patron to continue these researches, it must be assumed that the report of the Commission was unfavorable.[58]

This misplaced Renaissance man is an excellent example of an occult genius. He was rejected by his scientific colleagues. He professed a strange "Messianism" which is more like the expectation of the Second Coming than anything else. He could easily be considered socially

dangerous. And beneath his careful disguise as the respectable man of science lurked the soul of a Cabalist. When Wronski complained bitterly that Mickiewicz had stolen his idea of Messianism from him, the poet sarcastically inquired whether the Apostles had taken out a patent.[59]

Despite their differing outlooks, the two are not so far apart. Wronski must be seen in the context of the other Messianists in order that his ideas may be—even marginally—understood. He shared several of their preoccupations, notably the cult of Napoleon and a conviction of the providential mission of the Slav nations. Napoleon he proclaimed as a "NEW SAVIOR and an ULTIMATE REFORMER of humanity."[60] To the Russian Emperor Alexander he predicted the coming "Absolute-Union," a true Holy Alliance of all Slav peoples.[61] But the expected call to Warsaw to implement his reform program did not come, and Wronski died in 1853 with the despairing last words: "It's time I was dead; there's no bread for me in this country." A certain reputation survived him. The Antinomian Union eked out a precarious existence. Balzac had been in personal relations with Wronski; and a letter of Baudelaire survives, asking a friend to borrow copies of the Messianic works from the philosopher's widow. The composer Gounod was an enthusiast and his name appears on the list of subscribers to the posthumous works, together with that of the Emperor Pedro of Brazil.[62]

It is ironic that Wronski's most lasting influence was not in his hoped for "Absolute Reform of Human Knowledge" but in passing on the secrets of occultism which he had tried so long to hide. For although his direct influence continued to be felt in occult circles, his indirect influence was much further-reaching. This was chiefly exercised through the writings of Alphonse Louis Constant (1810-75), better known as "Eliphas Lévi."

It was during the last three years of Wronski's life that he met Constant, a romantic Christian Socialist, a hack journalist, a refugee from the priesthood, and a denizen of the remarkable Bohemia which preceded the more famous

Bohemia of the 1890s but included similar proportions of art, occultism, and politics. The ex-Abbé and former political prisoner also wrote execrable poetry and could turn his hand successfully to drawing. (Among other projects, he illustrated Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo.*) But he has been chiefly remembered as the author who gave to the turn of the century occultists, as well as to the general public, a colorful and romantic picture of "Magic," in particular in the *History of Magic* (1860) where Zoroaster, the Cabala, Pythagoras, and the Hermetic Tradition are confounded in a gaudy display with Satan, Vintras, Mesmerism, and the *Oupnek'hat.* Lévi knew the latter in the translation of Anquetil-Duperron, considered it the ancestor of all magical books, and presented uncritically the methods it recommended for attaining ecstasy—like that of staring fixedly at the end of the nose to induce paralysis of the optic nerve.[63] From this compendium of the supernatural was derived the popular idea of occultism which Madame Blavatsky was to exploit in her own imaginatively inferior productions. The Abbé Constant did, however, himself profess more sophisticated beliefs than those he retailed for public consumption. These were attained chiefly through his initiation by Wronski.

Lévi had read widely in Traditional literature ever since leaving school—Boehme, Swedenborg, Saint-Martin and, in particular, Knorr von Rosenreuth's *Kabbala Denudata.*[64] He was familiar with the works of Mickiewicz and he thought Towianski "an enthusiast of great magnetic power."[65] Thus, when he met the discoverer of the Absolute, albeit in tragic circumstances, he was well prepared to profit by the encounter.

From 1850 to 1852 the proprietor of the *Moniteur Parisien* was the Marquis de Montferrier, two of whose contributors were Constant and his wife. The Marquis became enamored of Mme. Constant, who encouraged his noble attentions. During the affair, Constant himself came into contact with the brother-in-law of the Marquis: Wronski himself. (Perhaps this aristocratic connection is the reason

why the philosopher lived, despite all his misfortunes, to the age of seventy-seven.) Wronski initiated Constant. How, we are not told. But it is possible to gather that the Pole revealed the basis of his philosophy to be the Cabala; that Constant, despite his subsequent railleries at Wronski's expense, considered himself very much the pupil of one who had "defined the essence of God," and that this meeting marked a turning-point in his life. Constant's wife finally left him while he was writing his first magical work, the *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*. And the ex-Abbé symbolically turned his name into Hebrew in the manner of the Cabala, becoming no longer Alphonse Constant, but Eliphas Lévi.[66]

The Magus had triumphed over the Artist, the Poet, and the Agitator. But this part of Constant's Bohemian personality was not unusual in the Paris of his day. What marks out Constant from other occultists, apart from his prodigal imagination and the comparative sophistication of his private beliefs, is his continuing connection with the Polish exiles. Among the first pupils of "Eliphas Lévi" were the brothers Alexander and Constantine Branicki, who lived in a château owned by a relation of Balzac, with whom Lévi was on good terms. Alexander had a fully-equipped alchemical laboratory, where he and his master carried out experiments. In 1861 the two travelled together to England where they visited Bulwer Lytton at Knebworth and attended a celebration of Vintrasian rites in the conventicle at 33 Marylebone Road.[67] In yet another abortive Polish rebellion in 1863, the Branickis were virtually ruined. The Magus, Eliphas Lévi, reverted to his former occupation of political pamphleteer and directed an *Appeal from Poland to France, by a POLE*, which appeared that year in Paris.[68] There are interesting indications of the light in which Lévi saw himself in his account of a meeting (arranged by Constantine Branicki) with the Polish Rabbi, Elias Soloweyczyk, who was the author of a book designed to explain the Talmud to Christians and the Gospel to the Jews and to demonstrate the identity of their doctrine. After a mutually respectful conversation they parted, as Lévi

records with satisfaction, with the farewell on both sides of "Sholem, Rabbi!"[69]

The French Rabbi was not the only sophisticated follower, as Lévi recorded, of the Traditions in mid-century Paris. His fellow-disciple of Wronski, Louis Lucas (1816-63), devoted his life to proving the reality of alchemical theories of matter.[70] It is notorious that Gérard de Nerval was influenced throughout his life—and possibly even in the manner of his death[71]—by Traditional doctrines.

De Nerval read widely in Egyptian and Hermetic myth, and expounded number theory and color theory—these also are trademarks of the occultist. During his most fey periods he would hold conversations with the spirit of Adam, cast from Paradise, whom he believed had received the Cabala as a consolation. When the spirits became too troublesome, de Nerval performed exorcisms—these did not stop short of asafoetida. In exceptional circumstances, he would perform the dance of the goddess Decerto whom he described as Astarte in the form of a fish. These exhibitions grew less frequent when one day the convulsions required by the goddess Decerto caused her devotee to hit his head on a book-case.[72]

It was de Nerval who discovered Alexander Weill (1811-99) in 1836 while in Frankfurt with his friend, the elder Dumas. Weill at the age of twelve had a vision telling him to leave the Alsatian village where he had been born. The local Rabbi had been most emphatic that, yes, that was the best thing young Weill might do in his life.[73] De Nerval persuaded him to come to Paris where Weill developed an increased sense of his mission and took for himself the resounding title of the "Isaiah of the Faubourg St. Honoré." Like Wronski, his chief success was not in imparting his personal philosophy—a particularly gloomy message that there was no forgiveness of sins—but in transmitting a knowledge of his native Cabala to the Bohemian circles in which he moved.

Those Bohemian circles, frequented also by the Abbé Constant, greedily absorbed the Cabalistic and other Traditional doctrines purveyed by Constant, Wronski, and

Weill. Of occultism they had hitherto had only the most rudimentary forms. There was the memory of the Portuguese Abbé José Custodio de Faria, who had brought back from India Oriental robes and exotic tastes. His lectures on Mesmerism were very popular, more for the exoticism of the *mise-en-scène* than for the scientific conclusions he reached.[74] A similar sort of cult was that of Alina d'Eldir, called *The Noble Gateway of Heaven.* (Madame d'Eldir was supposedly Indian; her husband, the "Chancellor" of the cult, was a French NCO.[75]) Even in the society of the 1820s there had been a mixing of this sort of occultism with intellectual circles. For example, when the Duke de Rochefoucauld-Liancourt founded the Society of Christian Morals in 1821, there came gentlemen, academics, churchmen, but also occultists. Charles de Rémusat and Guizot sat side by side with Spurzheim the phrenologist, Villeneuve, who combined his membership of the Institute with a devotion to Alina d'Eldir, and a prominent Martinist also devoted to the Indian princess.[76] By mid-century, however, two things had happened. Mesmerism and Indian exotica had ceased to attract the Establishment, and there had grown up a considerable body of intellectual opposition to the Powers That Were. This was the first Bohemia, the prototype for that of the 1890s, and, like that later Bohemia which derived so much from the first, the occult was a recognized part of its existence. Thus Baudelaire—whose Gnostic use of occult principles and whose reading of Wronski we have already noted—knew Alphonse Constant well enough to collaborate with him in *Les mystères galants.*[77] Thus Victor Hugo read Wronski and Lévi, and was personally friendly with Weill and de Nerval.[78]

The profundities of Wronski or of the Cabala were much more satisfying to Bohemia than the tawdry miracles of the magnetizers. Yet even out of these could spring some intellectual life.

Around the flat which Gérard de Nerval shared with the artist, Camille Rogier, gathered a Bohemian group which

included Théophile Gautier and Arsène Houssaye, known as the "Doyenné gang." Another member of the group was Alphonse Esquiros (1812-76), a young journalist for whom Victor Hugo had found a job as occult correspondent for *La Presse*. Esquiros was a schoolfellow and, for a long time, a friend of the Abbé Constant who must also be counted one of the Doyenné gang since he provided the illustrations for a series first edited by Houssaye, then by Esquiros, called *Les Belles Femmes de Paris* (1839-40).[79] His friend anticipated Constant's serious interest in things occult. About 1835 Esquiros began to practice Mesmerism and study phrenology. Three years later he published a novel called *The Magician* which, in its exoticism and philosophical tone, is a foretaste of Josephine Péladan. But whereas Péladan proclaimed the conquest of weakness by the will of the Magus, Esquiros' conclusion is pessimistic. The novel's main characters are Ab-Hakek, the magician, and the artist, Stell, who represent two separate ways of life. A short extract will give the flavor; here Ab-Hakek and Stell meet for the first time.

"What do you want from me, young man?" he said in a fairly pleasant voice.

"In a few words it's this: I have at home a statue, a marble Virgin Mary, which I want to make come alive. I have been told, Master, that you have this power, and I need your knowledge."

Here the figure of the magician took on a strange aspect; one might have said that of a prophet, who wished to draw into himself the whole future.

"Your name, young man?"

"Stell."

"Why do you want to give life to the unfortunate statue? Why torment stone which has done nothing to you? Are you so happy to be a man that you want to add to the number of your kindred, or are you perhaps so unfortunate as like me to envy marble . . . whose rest you would like to disturb? Tell me, what's your reason?"

"I love her."

"Your statue?"

"My statue."[80]

The end of Stell is suicide. Ab-Hakek comes to see his vaunted magical science as only the knowledge which conceals ignorance. Pessimism triumphs despite the occult.

But if occultism might inspire literature, the Traditions themselves became ever more literary. The Abbé Constant speaks of a whole school of occult fantasists who followed Esquiros, particularly mentioning one of his friend's disciples, Henri Viscount Delaage, who claimed that he was able to cure influenza merely by walking into the same room as the sufferer.[81] Delaage was a notorious womanizer, capable of devoting a thirty-line sentence to extolling the virtues of the female sex; and he purveyed a brand of occultism similar to that of Constant but lacking his imaginative powers.[82] There were other boulevard prophets, Magi in a small way, whom it is scarcely worth the trouble of noticing. The Traditions became more and more the material of artists and poets. Traditional occultism was part of Bohemia well before 1848; and that the Bohemians of the 1890s were familiar with its doctrines we have already seen. To the Abbé Constant they gave the respect due to a great Master. But the occultism of Bohemia, the more it became adapted to its new home, grew ever more away from the conceptions of the Catholic Rabbi.

Constant shared with Delaage and Péladan, as with many of the Renaissance Magi, the trait of continually professing his own orthodoxy. He was, in fact, a "self-strengthener" in matters occult. His summary of his own position is clear enough.

> Glory be to the Christ, who has brought to their completion the symbols of the Ancient Mysteries, and who has prepared the reign of knowledge by faith. Will you now be greater than all Magi? Hide away your science in the recesses of your mind. Become a Christian, simple and docile; be a faithful servant of the Church, believe, mortify yourself, and obey.[83]

> But Christ had, as all great teachers have had, one teaching for the people, and also an esoteric doctrine. To John, the Beloved disciple, he confided the deepest mysteries of the Holy

> Cabala; and John in after years revealed or reveiled them in his Apocalypse, which is indeed a synthesis of all earlier magical, prophetic and Cabalistic works.[84]

The first piece of advice is orthodox: Christ is the final revelation, containing in himself all others. But the second represents a doctrine which was to become familiar: that there was a secret inner or esoteric Christianity which only the elect could understand. In this way the Christian Magus could tell himself that he was only penetrating the true meaning of orthodoxy, the more he was led from what it seemed to say. But like the Chinese attempt to preserve the essence of their tradition while altering its appearance, Constant's efforts to place the Traditions within a Christian framework merely resulted in emphasizing the novel at the expense of the familiar. The guest had been invited into Bohemia, which had never cared much for the Establishment; now it discarded unwanted clothing and refused to leave.

The role of unorthodox priests in the revival of the Traditions is not limited to Constant.[85] Boullan's Cabalism was complemented among his opponents by that of the Abbé Roca, who also preached an "esoteric" Christianity.[86] The second of the two presiding genii—the first being Constant—whom Victor-Emile Michelet mentions as having inspired the 1890s group of occultists,[87] was also a rejected priest. Paul-François-Gaspard Lacuria (1806-90) was forced to leave the college which he himself had founded, by the publication of his book *The Harmonies of Being* in 1847. His attempt to prove the fundamental unity of all things by numerology is directly in the line of Traditional thought. Lacuria found a ready lodging in Bohemia, where, in a tiny room, he sat for sixty years correcting his great work, talking with artist friends, and teaching music to the young Gounod. His influence was particularly felt by Péladan. Lacuria himself, however, was the product of another strain of the occult Tradition than that which runs from the Polish Messianists through the Abbé Constant. It is a minor line, but with points of contact with the first.

The father of the native French line of Traditional thought was Antoine Fabre d'Olivet (1767-1825). After an early popular success with patriotic plays during the Revolution of 1789, Fabre d'Olivet abandoned his place in the Jacobin Club and turned to a mystical philosophy. In 1800 he narrowly escaped implication in a plot to blow up Napoleon's coach. The next year his *Letters to Sophie on History* appeared, containing a completely imaginary account of the disappearance of Atlantis, a theme which he was later to elaborate in the *Philosophical History of the Human Race* (1824), upon which later occultists were to draw. This immense study of 12,000 years of human history introduced to occultism a concept which Madame Blavatsky was to develop in *The Secret Doctrine*: that of several successive races of men inhabiting the earth. The white race, Fabre thought, had appeared near the North Pole and displaced the ruling black race. (The red race had largely perished in Atlantis.) There arose among the whites a semi-divine Druid named Ram who attained a supreme position, chiefly because he discovered a cure for elephantiasis, and established a theocratic empire which lasted until 2000 B.C. For its originator, this was the ideal age; and it is Fabre d'Olivet who is responsible for grafting on to the Traditions the notion of specious pre-history.[88]

Of the Traditions he had himself little knowledge. He knew Hebrew but used it not to study the Cabala but to retranslate the first ten books of Genesis in order to reveal the true meaning of Moses, an initiate into the Mysteries of Memphis.[89] His praise of Pythagoras was largely connected with his attempts to rediscover the Greek modes of music and hence to deduce those principles of cosmic harmony in which Lacuria was to find his inspiration.[90] Fabre d'Olivet was a speculator and romancer first and foremost. One of his greatest successes was a fraudulent edition of the poems of a troubadour he had "discovered." Unashamedly Fabre admitted that he would have liked to do for the *langue d'oc* what Macpherson had done for Scotland with *Ossian*.[91] It was the religious cast of his mind which discovered

everywhere relics of ancient mystery religions, that enabled occultists to include him in their Traditions. Fabre d'Olivet reinforced this attribution by performing two spectacular cures on deaf-mutes with the aid of mesmerism.[92] Through him a strain of what can only be called imaginative writing was adopted by the occultists of the 1890s whose uncritical spirit is but a measure of their need.

Whereas Fabre d'Olivet might merely be considered an eccentric, his disciple and plagiarizer, Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, was a fraud of the highest degree. His influence as the third of the occult trinity who presided over the Rose-Croix cannot be doubted, but on the merits of the man and his works it is scarcely understandable. It is difficult to know which to dissect first: the Marquis who was no Marquis, or the Magus who was worse.

Joseph-Alexandre Saint-Yves—of course, there was no d'Alveydre—was born in Paris in 1842 and died in Versailles in 1909. He had many friends and disciples in the circle surrounding de Guaita. Of these Papus—a great admirer of his verse which is, if possible, worse than the Abbé Constant's—was the most favored.[93] The faithful represented their master as a saintly and knowledgeable figure who, in the last years of his life, succeeded in performing the alchemical transmutation on himself whilst in retirement at Versailles.[94] His philosophical works, preaching the social reforms he called "synarchy," were valued as evidence of his erudition. His invention of the Archeometer—an instrument for predicting events and coordinating all human knowledge—was regarded with awe.[95] Saint-Yves claimed to have been initiated into the Mysteries of the Hindu faith by two of the highest officials of a "Brahminical Church." He preserved, Papus wrote, all his notebooks from the period of his instruction, signed by his Brahman on every page.[96]

His enemies told another story. The malicious Jules Bois describes him as the "master of French occultists," but gives a scarcely flattering description. Saint-Yves is represented as a dandy, a social climber who married into

the nobility and bought his title from the Pope. He once claimed, says Bois, to have written 4,000 pages in three days, and to be in telepathic communication with the Grand Lama of Tibet. The famous Brahman in question was an Indian bird-fancier at Le Havre who had given Saint-Yves some lessons in Hebrew but had given up his disciple as a charlatan. After losing his wife's fortune in alchemical enterprises, the Magus retired to Versailles where he converted the room in which his wife died into a chapel and obtained permission to have Mass celebrated there. His wife's place was always laid at table; and Saint-Yves, who claimed to be in constant communication with her, would impose on visitors the ordeal of praying before the chapel altar whereupon he would declare that his wife, now an angel, had blessed the new arrival.[97]

More is to come. In 1886 there appeared a novel entitled *Monsieur le Marquis*, by Claire Vautier of the Opera, a former mistress of Saint-Yves, in which it is thought that her publisher, Flammarion, had a hand.[98] Now the Marquis of the title is palpably Saint-Yves; and Mme. Vautier, to make doubly sure that none of her readers misses the point, includes large slices from the works of the real "Marquis," foot-noted as such but used as dialogue in the mouth of her leading character. Charlatanism is the least crime of which she accuses Saint-Yves. His own father—whom the apologists of Saint-Yves delight in presenting as a tyrant—is made in the novel to say that of all the madmen he had known, his son is the most dangerous.[99] From claiming at school that he has a mission greater than Christ's, the young man is shown as deserting from the army and taking refuge in Jersey. Here he obtains a local reputation as a mesmerist, uses his powers to secure the love of a girl whom he then gets with child and abandons. The girl drowns herself in despair. The future Marquis comes to Paris, gathers a small band of disciples and makes a name in the salons, where he is half-ridiculed, half-believed as a prophet. At one such gathering he meets the actress who stands for Claire

Vautier.[100] After a time he contrives to persuade her of his mission. The prophet then makes of his disciple his mistress; he also wishes to make use of her clairvoyant powers under his mesmeric influence. None too soon the friends of the heroine, persuaded that the mystic is a bad lot—chiefly, it appears, because of his plans to save the world by feeding, clothing, and even housing all mankind with algae—intervene in time to save the actress from suicide. A chivalrous friend marries her to give the prophet's child a name, while the cause of the scandal seduces a rich and aging aristocrat, avid to make gold. The story of Jules Bois is confirmed: the papal title, the loss of a fortune by alchemy. These are capped by the disillusionment of his new wife.

Claire Vautier claimed one day to have discovered on Saint-Yves's work-table unpublished manuscripts of Fabre d'Olivet which the unscrupulous disciple was incorporating in his own work entirely without acknowledgement. Unacknowledged borrowing from this source was noticed soon after the publication of Saint-Yves's *Mission of the Jews* in 1884. The hypothetical empire of Ram, the curer of elephantiasis, appears in the work of M. le Marquis. But, whereas this plagiarism has been noted, others, no less obvious, have not. The influence of Wronski and perhaps other Messianists is detectible in Saint-Yves's idea of the "Missions" of the working class, the Indians, and particularly the Jews. His crowning *folie de grandeur* was to publish in 1884 the *Mission of the Sovereigns*, by one of them. As for the famous Archeometer, "the key to all the religions and all the sciences of antiquity," it is a disc of colored cardboard with some very complex diagrammatic arrangements. But it is markedly inferior to the machine which probably inspired it—Hoëne-Wronski's extraordinary calculating-machine, the Prognometer, which the Abbé Constant discovered one day in a Paris junk-shop. While the Master lived, the disciple had not been allowed to see the Prognometer. Now he bought it, recognizing Wronski's writing in the mathematical symbols which

covered the contrivance. Something like a very complicated astrolabe, the movable spheres, discs and pointers were inscribed with enigmatic mottoes:

ALL SCIENCES ARE THE DEGREES OF A CIRCLE WHICH TURNS ON THE SAME AXIS;
THE FUTURE IS IN THE PAST, BUT IT IS NOT WHOLLY CONTAINED IN THE PRESENT.[101]

M. le Marquis de Saint-Yves d'Alveydre absorbed mystical theories how he could, and regurgitated them barely digested. His own multi-purpose algae were scarcely less adept at changing their forms. Saint-Yves's posthumous work, *The Mission of India*, is crammed full of notions derived from Theosophy, like that of the subterranean Himalayan realm of Agartha, whose government is Fabre d'Olivet's perfect theocracy. Even the belief of Saint-Yves that his wife appeared to him as an angel seems to be prefigured in the life of Fabre d'Olivet, to whom would appear the spirit of a foresaken mistress who had died of heart-break.[102]

It is clear that whatever power Saint-Yves possessed lay solely in the immediate impact of his personality. Outside Paris, the Traditions might be known in their resurrected form either through the writings of "Eliphas Lévi" and occultists who followed him; or as diluted in the works of poets and artists who found their inspiration in the occult. The romancing of Fabre d'Olivet might be known to a cosmopolitan like Madame Blavatsky; but to others the revival of interest in the occult served most often to draw attention to the material of the Traditions from which they could form their own syntheses.

Ellic Howe has shown that there is a certain revival of astrology in France and Germany during the last two decades of the 19th century and a rather more long-standing increase of interest in Great Britain.[103] Of the other branches of Traditional knowledge alchemy had a certain following and a new version of ritual magic a very small but most influential vogue. In 1836 Joseph Anton Rotti was

granted a pension by the Austrian government to make gold by the combination of various metals. His proceedings were entirely alchemical.[104] In France, apart from Saint-Yves d'Alveydre and Louis Lucas, alchemists included Albert Poisson, one of the circle of Péladan and de Guaita, and the irrascible Auguste Rodez who once attacked with a hammer a friend who joked at his experiments.[105] There also lived in Paris the orthodox chemist Theodore Tiffereau, who seems to have made a very small quantity of gold in Mexico in 1842 by supposedly duplicating the processes of nature. Unfortunately, he could not duplicate the experiment for the Academy;[106] and in any case this was not Hermetic alchemy. In England, Mrs. Mary Anne Attwood published in 1850 *A Suggestive Enquiry into the Hermetic Mystery*, which was withdrawn immediately on publication as revealing too much of the sacred Art. More lasting than her compendium of alchemy and Mesmerism was the interest she inspired in the occultist A. E. Waite and the Theosophist G. R. S. Mead; for although Mrs. Attwood gave her alchemical library to A. P. Sinnett of the Theosophical Society, only these two pseudo-scholars attempted to make anything of the material.[107] It cannot be claimed that there was any great revival of practical alchemy, although in France most people on the fringe of the occult groups would know something of the "art."

From the traditions of occult Masonry, with its attempt to duplicate the ecstatic effects of the ancient Mysteries, and a hybrid of ritual magic and the Cabala, S. L. MacGregor Mathers and Dr. Wynn Westcott concocted in England "the Order of the Golden Dawn" to which belonged, at various times, Florence Farr the actress, Aleister Crowley and, notably, W. B. Yeats. The brief presence of the poetizing Crowley, and the completely overshadowing presence of Yeats are the only facts worth emphasis in the present context. As for the Order, whilst fascinating in itself and in its ramifications, it was a perfectly logical development of what had gone before. In France, Papus revived a Martinist Order—or indeed invented it. And since the

beginning of the century there had been sporadic attempts to prove that the Christian sacraments were the remains of pagan Mysteries.[108] The Golden Dawn was unique in combining so many elements of Traditional speculation at once; but its materials were by no means original.

Within the establishment of the Church of England, the classical scholar Dean Inge redirected attention to the Tradition of Plotinus and those Christians who had followed him. The interest aroused by Inge's lectures at Oxford in 1899—"Inge's Bamptons," as they are known in ecclesiastical circles—was extensive. Inge professed to keep well clear of what he called "the beggarly elements of later Neo-Platonism." Yet he recommended Fechner and admitted that Christian mysticism owed a debt to the Greek Mysteries. Even more successful in popularizing the concept of Christian Mysticism was Evelyn Underhill, a former member of an offshoot of the Golden Dawn, whose book *Mysticism* appeared in 1911. "Mystics" of all sorts proliferated, a vogue sprang up even for primitives like the American journalist, Prentice Mulford.[109] This epidemic of woolly thinking which, in general, bore no relation to the works of Inge and Underhill, was encouraged by the popularity of various doctrines of "esoteric Christianty," traces of which belief have already been noted in the Abbé Constant.

Two sources of these opinions can be traced. The most obvious is the book *The Great Initiates* of Edouard Schuré which, in the first thirty-seven years after its publication in 1889, ran through eighty-five editions.[110] Schuré claimed suddenly to have been inspired by a correspondence between the founders of all religions, also that his first intuition was of the similarity between the Mysteries of Eleusis and the revelation of Christ.[111] Nevertheless the romancing hand of Fabre d'Olivet provided Schuré with some of his material (the ubiquitous Druid Ram appears among the Great Initiates). The immense popularity of Schuré's book testifies to its reassuring message which, after

all, was a garbled and romanticized version of some part of Traditional thought. Under diversity there was unity; under apparent attack, the religious spirit would not fall.

But an earlier source of "esoteric" doctrines is found in the prophetic dreams of Anna Bonus Kingsford (1846-88). Francis King records a tradition current in occult circles that Anna Kingsford was an ether addict.[112] Throughout the biography by her amanuensis and devoted admirer, Edward Maitland, there are references to ether which seemed to give relief to her almost perpetual illness. This gives the lie to her assertion that she never took any "dream-producing agent." Anna Kingsford began her creative dreaming with a horrifying vision of doom. She is on a train hurtling into the night:

> Ahead of the train is a frightful precipice of monstrous height and at its base beats a fathomless sea. The railway ends only with the abyss. Over that will the train hurl itself into annihilation. THERE IS NO ONE ON THE ENGINE!

The dreamer sees her friend Maitland on the train and tries to persuade him to jump down; but he turns to her "with a look of intense earnestness," and says, "No, we will not leap down. We will stop the train."[113] Perhaps symbolically this is done by uncoupling the engine.

This dream occurred in 1876 at the beginning of Anna Kingsford's association with Maitland. She was the frustrated wife of a Shropshire parson, heavily involved in the campaign against vivisection; and Maitland a rolling stone with religious leanings. Their partnership began when Anna Kingsford took it into her head to go and study medicine in Paris in order to further her anti-vivisectionist cause. Because her husband could not leave his parish, Maitland accompanied her to Paris as "uncle" to her "niece." Both uncle and niece were alarmed at the "defective state of Parisian civilization" which allowed women to be accosted in the street.[114] But they soon became preoccupied with the increasingly prophetic character of Anna's

dreams. From proclaiming doom, these turned to the exposition of doctrine; a doctrine which was hugely illuminated as the pair began to move more in occult circles.

> With the exception of the Bible, our richest finds were among the Neo-Platonists, the Gnostics, the Sufis, and above all the Hermetics, or students of the higher because the spiritual alchemy.[115]

The teaching which emerged was a sophisticated version of what Schuré was to popularize. Early Church Fathers were called to witness that Christianity, far from supplanting pagan religion, had merely complemented it; that therefore beneath the external appearance of Christianity lay the hidden, esoteric doctrine.

> That which is called the Christian religion existed among the ancients, and never did not exist, from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh, at which time the true religion which already existed began to be called Christianity.[116]

In French occult circles the chief protagonists of the new revelation were Baron Spedalieri, formerly a close friend and disciple of the Abbé Constant; and Marie, Countess of Caithness and Duchesse de Pomar. (For once the titles are not affected.) Spedalieri saw Anna Kingsford's gospel as a "Messianisme"[117]—interestingly demonstrating how the Abbé Constant passed on the teachings of his Polish master. The Countess of Caithness, who believed herself a reincarnation of Mary, Queen of Scots, and was President of the Paris Theosophical Society, herself received direct communications from Heaven which she regarded as confirming Anna Kingsford's as a divine mission.[118] In England from 1884 to 1886, the teachings were diffused through Maitland and Kingsford's Hermetic Society, which was in close contact with Theosophical circles. John Varley, the artist of *Thought-Forms*, and his wife were devoted to Anna; Mrs. Varley considered the prophetess to be the fulfillment of a prediction made to her while a girl in Ireland, that in Paris she would meet a woman who would change her

life.[119] MacGregor Mathers and Wynn Westcott of the Golden Dawn lectured at the Hermetic Society. The group's two founders also maintained close touch with H. P. Blavatsky. Always the spirits cried through poor Anna: "Use chloroform, only chloroform; no stimulants; not tea, coffee, nor brandy . . . Keep her under the chloroform, that we may continue to speak. . . ."[120]

Whether this prophetic tyranny or her congenital illness occasioned Anna's early death, her teachings had reached a wide audience in occult circles and continued to be appropriated by other late Victorian and Belle Epoque "mystics." The fact that they were not widely circulated in their original form is because no effective organization existed to preach the Word. Maitland did found an "Esoteric Christian Union" in 1891; but there is no sign of its achieving anything beyond a manifesto.[121] It was through the Theosophical Society, that all-absorbent sponge, that the doctrine of Anna Kingsford found a wider public. By the time that Annie Besant had turned the Society into a Christian Messianic cult, "esoteric Christianity" had been simplified and incorporated into Theosophical theology. While Edouard Schuré is probably responsible for the idea that the historical Jesus was trained by the enigmatic Essenes, then became an initiate in the Egyptian Mysteries, Anna Kingsford is the source of the recurrent concept that Gnosticism was the true and original form of Christianity rather than its most devoted enemy.[122]

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the worldwide organization of the Theosophists has been responsible for the greatest diffusion of occult doctrines, and that these have often been purveyed in peculiar forms. Astrology, alchemy, Gnosticism, endless forms of Eastern religion, all have been grist to its mill. Madame Blavatsky's magpie-like habits are already familiar: her last book, *The Secret Doctrine*, takes as its text the *Book of Dyzan*, which Gerschom Scholem has shown to be merely an act of imagination, postulating a very ancient—and hence more sacred, more occult—source for a "pompous" Cabalistic book called the

Sifra Di-Tseniutha.[123] This technique was continued by Mme. Blavatsky's successors. To it can be traced much of the confusion of opposing strains of thought which rightly alarms many a would-be student of the Tranditions.

Some of these confused strands this chapter has tried to disentangle. The occultists' Secret Traditions underwent further confusion in the course of their 19th-century revival. Some of their manifestations appear frankly demented. But the creation of whole new religions from ancient materials is in itself an interesting phenomenon. It has wider implications; a discernible opting for rejected knowledge, especially on the part of the artistic, literary, and articulate worlds—however mad we may think them—means a rejection of the Establishment. This rejection, I have argued, springs from anxiety about social change, also from an inability to accept the bleak findings of the scientific method about man's place in the universe. The flight to the Secret Traditions represents an escape from insignificance. For the whole burden of Traditional thought, from whatever source it comes, is that man is divine, capable of divinity, or, at the very least, important as the possessor of power. This re-assertion of man's cosmic relevance raises an important point.

The idea of forming part of the Elect is a familiar one in religion. Increasingly, it became part of 19th century occultism. It is not difficult to see that this represents an extreme form of reaction against human insignificance. The Polish Messianists, who found ready to hand the Jewish example, adopted the stance of an elect race. In reality, their insignificance had been proved on the field of battle; in this world Poland had been ground in the mire. But in the spiritual world she was exalted. The Poles were not the only nation which produced such theories. A more practical version of the claim to be the Elect, the real Children of Israel, can be found in the doctrines of the British Israelites, whose sources date back to the publication in 1840 by the Christian phrenologist, John Wilson, of *Our Israelitish Origins.*[124] In the case of British Israel, the arguments are usually

employed to justify applying some elaborate system of Scriptural interpretation to British history. Nevertheless, the existence of the doctrine in a supposedly flourishing country indicates—particularly if accurate prophecy were the goal in view—that the need to seem more than a bubble on the ocean of creation was not confined to defeated nations. The need among occultists to appear *especially* elect also finds its expression in identification with Jewry. The Abbé Constant is a case in point; a further example of the syndrome is provided by the urine-drinking alchemist Duchanteau, who was so convinced that he ought to be a Jew that he travelled all the way to Amsterdam to be circumcized.[125]

Another group which proclaimed itself elect was that of the Artists. Not for them the "glory by association" of the British Israelite. The Artist exalted his proper function. It has already been suggested that a religious approach to Art might turn Art into a religion and the Artist into a priest. Because of the juxtaposition of occultist and Artist in Bohemia, occult teachings became the source to which the priests of this, one of the several secular religions, most easily turned. The two Traditional patterns of redemption—the pursuit of the Beautiful, the Good, representing the search for Divine Union, which the descent into the Abyss is the alchemical process, the progress through the Mysteries, the trial by ordeal—these became translated into terms of Art; but also of the Artist's life. Without these Traditional bases, the mythical figure of the Artist would not be as it is popularly conceived.

First, the word "Artist," used with a capital letter, is the alchemist's term for himself. It is surely significant that Baudelaire, for example, uses alchemical imagery to express his passage through the flames to knowledge. Alchemy has a general significance for our concept of the Artist. Underneath all his posturings, the Artist is thought to be a Seeker for Truth. This is why he is allowed the license he is conventionally accorded. It was certainly as important to the Symbolists to discover truth as it was to write about it.

This remains true of all Artists (as opposed to mere painters, writers, musicians). I do not intend to venture any theories of aesthetics: merely to advance the distinction between the Artist and the Craftsman. The self-regarding Artist adds to the simple practice of his craft an idea of its sacramental quality. The effect of this on his view of himself is profound. In the Middle Ages, the Artist could paint for the glory of God; afterwards, he came to write, paint, or compose for someone else's glory. By the end of the 19th century that person was himself. Therefore the alchemical process has some relevance to the progress of the Artist as it came to be conceived. The function of both processes was to make oneself as God.

> The self-created man—after a phase of pride and ambition described by Mickiewicz in his poem *Dziady*—comes to his self-crucifixion . . . As soon as the sacrifice has been accomplished, a divine peace fills the heart of the self-crucified man. He feels himself a God, in God. . . . [126]

This was written of Mickiewicz by one of his fellow countrymen. We have considered Mickiewicz as an occultist—but from the point of view of most readers he was a great Romantic poet who happened to be a mystic. The two functions complement each other; and if we can cure the habit of classifying people as butchers, bakers, or candlestick-makers, and look at the whole man, it is very difficult to see where the occultist leaves off and the poet begins. So with Baudelaire, or with Yeats. They are men, Artists, whose occultism forms part of one particular type of response to the human situation.

There has always been something of the magical in the work of the Artist. The ability to conceive and execute personal worlds, conceptual, visual, abstracted, is by definition out of the ordinary. The word used of the Artist is "create": a Craftsman makes, but an Artist creates. As is well-known, the change in the status of the Artist from humble Craftsman to friend and mentor of princes took place during the Italian Renaissance. It is no coincidence that at the

two periods when we have substantial knowledge of the glorification of the Artist, the Traditions emerged from their habitual confinement underground. There are records of several Renaissance Artists becoming absorbed in alchemy. One critic of the religious complexion which Art has assumed has traced the idea of the Artist as a demi-Divine Creator directly to Ficino and the Neo-Platonists. After the Age of Reason the Artist elevated himself still further. He became lonely, a seer of sublime visions, no longer a man as other men. Mickiewicz followed Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin in the opinion that unless one had worked a miracle, one should not write poetry.[127] The super-human agent and the miraculous act are thus united in the figure of the Artist.

In any case, because Art itself had become a religion, the Artist naturally acquired the status of priest. It was a rather unorthodox priesthood, however—a rebel priesthood whose creed was that of the Abbey of Thélème. The Artist was at liberty—indeed compelled—to treat the standards of the world as if they did not exist. This by now familiar position is that of Gnostic libertinism. Baudelaire, after all, believed in a "Satan-Trismegistus," who compelled his descent into the Abyss. It is therefore not surprising to find a Gnostic Church reviving in 19th-century Paris, whose leading spirit was the poet and Academician, Fabre des Essarts. His name was one bandied about by Retté's publisher, "Arcturus."

In 1888, one Jules Doinel, an official in the library of Orléans, discovered a manuscript written in 1022 by a Cathar martyr who had been burned in the town that year. Doinel himself was a doubtful character who published anti-Masonic literature in the period of Taxil's prospering. He now felt himself consecrated by the "Aeon Jésus" to re-establish the Gnostic religion in France. By 1895, however, the founder of this church had returned to Rome, leaving an episcopal synod composed by Papus, his disciple, Paul Sédir, and Chamuel of the Librairie du Merveilleux. These made way within the hierarchy for Fabre des Essarts, who took the name of the Patriarch Synesius. (Synesius was an

early Church Father whose magical writings had given the Middle Ages some authority for pre-Christian practices.) Although Fabre des Essarts was on close terms with occultists and the ecclesiastical underground—it seems that the Gnostic Church received consecration at the hands of an Eastern bishop in the house of Lady Caithness—his church included some quite distinguished members (among whom was the former director of one of the National Theatres). The Church was noticed by the papacy, and Leo XIII issued an apostolic letter against "the ancient Albigensian heresy."[128]

It may be tempting to dismiss the Gnostic Church as a piece of ecclesiastical byplay. But on examining its creed, it becomes obvious that Fabre des Essarts knew a respectable amount about the doctrines he professed. He borrowed something from the "esotericists," defining the Gnosis as "esoteric Christianity."[129] But the substance of traditional Gnosticism remained. The world was the creation of Satan,[130] and the solutions advanced are the familiar two: libertinism or asceticism.[131] The Patriarch Synesius fulminated against the double standard of sexual morality:

> which on the one hand brands as infamous the woman who surrenders herself to anyone, and on the other extends an almost admiring tolerance to the amorous adventurer. Lucretia Borgia is the equal of Don Juan, or morality is nothing but simple convention![132]

He did not, however, declare himself definitely for either the ascetic or the amoral solutions.

It is not permissible to write off the development of this small body of opinion in the Paris of the 1890s: the origins and the founder, certainly; Papus, Chamuel, and Sédir as incorrigible joiners of esoteric groups, perhaps. But not an intelligent elaboration of Gnostic doctrine at a time when a precisely Gnostic code of conduct was being adopted by the emergent Artist. There is no need to argue cause and effect. It is the identity of response which matters. Fabre des Essarts chose to make his expression of that response in a

primarily religious fashion; but he was also a Symbolist poet. The Artist, who made a mystery of his Craft—it is not all that far-fetched to compare this with what the occultists had made of the crafts of the Egyptian goldsmiths or the English stone-masons—was expressing a religious impulse. When he made a mystery of his *life*, in debauch or in withdrawal from the world, this also was a religious response, which can be accurately described as Gnostic.[133]

This is still all very mysterious—and far removed from everyday life? But this is precisely the point. Those who adopt Traditional modes of thought, whether expressed in Traditional form or in some superficially different guise, do so exactly because they dislike everyday life—just as there is an instinctive reaction in some humans which prevents the attempt to understand any thinking which is not survival-oriented. On the other hand, politics, that superficially hard-headed sequence of "want" and "get," has by no means remained immune from more idealistic considerations. In the 19th century, it would be surprising if we did not find the irrational response to political questions as well as to personal and social problems.

One simple basis for the argument is this. If the occult attracts to itself all rejected knowledge—and we have seen how an "aesthetic" and intellectual opposition formed in Bohemia—what about rejected social and political ideas? Just as a refractory peasantry like the Stedingers might, in the Middle Ages, be branded as heretics, in the 19th century subversive elements of all sorts were cast into the limbo of opposition to right order. It is therefore possible to discover politicians among occultists and occultists among politicians. As with the poets, it sometimes becomes difficult to know where agitator and occultist part company. First, to show the connection.

1. Stanislas Szpotanski, *Adam Mickiewicz et le romantisme* (Paris, 1923), pp. 46-7.
2. Erdan, *La Francè Mystique*, vol. II, p. 29.
3. Erdan, *La France Mystique*, vol. II, p. 1.

4. "Comme un abracadabrant écuyer de quelque Pologne fantastique": quoted *Nouvelle Revue du Midi*, "Péladan," p. 186.

5. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones*, p. 93.

6. N. O. Lossky, "Three Chapters in the History of Polish Messianism" in *International Philosophical Library*, vol. II, No. 9 (Prague, September 1936), p. 31.

7. Maryla Falk, "Indian elements in Slowacki's thought," from *Julius Slowacki, The Centenary Volume* (London, 1951), pp. 190 ff.

8. Lossky, "Three Chapters," p. 24.

9. Falk, "Indian elements," p. 196.

10. See his *Grundlage der universellen Philosophie* (Karlsruhe and Freiburg i. Breisgau, 1837)—"In unserem System der Erkenntniss sind alle möglichen Systeme verselben begriffen," p. 305.

11. See his posthumously published, *Die Freimaurerei in ihrem Wesen and Unwesen* (Leipzig, 1873). Trentowski died in 1869.

12. B. P. Hepner, "History and the Future," in *The Review of Politics* (Notre Dame, Indiana), vol. 15, no. 3 (July 1953), pp. 328-49.

13. Walter Kühne, *Graf August Cieszkowski* (Leipzig, 1938), pp. 318-19. Cieszkowski lived 1814-94.

14. For Krasinski, see Lossky, "Three Polish Messianists" in *International Philosophical Library*, vol. III, no. 11 (Prague, November 1937), pp. 3 ff., and M. M. Gardner, *The Anonymous Poet of Poland* (Cambridge, 1919).

15. Joseph Ujejski, "Allgemeiner Überblick der religiösersozialen Strömmungen unter den polnischen Emigranten nach dem Jahre 1831," in *Bulletin International de l'Academie des Sciences de Cracovie* section—Classe de Philologie, Classe d'Histoire et de Philosophie (Cracow, 1915), p. 24.

16. See Chapter 8.

17. Wiktor Weintraub, "Adam Mickiewicz, the Mystic-Politician," in *Harvard Slavic Studies*, vol. I (1953), pp. 150-51.

18. Henri Desmettre, *Towianski et le Messianisme Polonais* (unpublished doctoral thesis presented 1947 to the Faculty of Theology, Lille), pp. 223-7. An invaluable source, containing translations of much material otherwise available only in Polish.

19. Desmettre, *Towianski*, p. 236; cf. Valerian Krasinski—not the poet, Sigismund—*Sketch of the Religious*

History of the Slavonic Nations (2nd edition, Edinburgh, 1851), pp. 292-3, who says that a Russian Admiral Pleshcheyev was Grabianka's partner in this enterprise. Cf. A. E. Waite's garbled account in *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (London, 1924), pp. 531-45, where he says that a Professor J. G. Schwarz brought "Rosicrucianism"—by which he here means Martinism—into Russia in 1782 from the Masonic conference at Wilhelmsbad. All that really matters is that it *got* there: but Krasinski seems to speak from near knowledge.

20. Krasinski, *Religious History*, p. 293.
21. Krasinski, *Religious History*, pp. 294-7.
22. Desmettre, *Towianski*, pp. 99-100.
23. Desmettre, *Towianski*, pp. 101-18.
24. Weintraub, "Mickiewicz," p. 145. Also see Samuel Scheps, *Adam Mickiewicz, ses affinites juives* (Paris, 1964), p. 33, and Desmettre, *Towianski*, p. 236.
25. Desmettre, *Towianski*, pp. 215-22 and p. 236.
26. Desmettre, *Towianski*, pp. 239 ff.
27. Desmettre, *Towianski*, pp. 263-5.
28. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 303.
29. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 318.
30. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 303-4.
31. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 325 ff.
32. Desmettre, *Towianski*, p. 227 and pp. 263-4. See also note 37 below.
33. Ujejski, "Uberblick der religiöser-sozialen Strömmungen," p. 27. This was the radical committee of Joachim Lelewel, which constituted the main body of opposition to the monarchist party of Prince Adam Czartoryski.
34. Scheps, *Mickiewicz*, pp. 73-4.
35. Desmettre, *Towianski*, p. 227.
36. Scheps, *Mickiewicz*, p. 53.
37. Scheps, *Mickiewicz*, pp. 53 and 56. See also letters printed by Attille Begey, *André Towianski et Israel* (Rome, 1912), pp. 84-8.

The Zionist movement proper did not start until after the assassination of Alexander II of Russia in 1881 and the formation of the *Hoveve Zion* societies. It was another Rothschild—Baron Edmund (1845-1934)—who financed most of the early Zionist colonies. A connection between Judaeo-Christian and Polish brands of Napoleon-worship might have sprung from Napoleon's invitation made to all Jews during the siege of Acre (1799) to join

with him in re-establishing "ancient Jerusalem." Unfortunately, Napoleon left the East before his proclamation had time to reach any Jewish community. He might notwithstanding have been seen as a possible benefactor of both Polish and Jewish nations. See Israel Cohen, *A Short History of Zionism* (London, 1951), p. 51; and pp. 28 ff. for *Hoveve Zion* societies.

38. Scheps, *Mickiewicz*, pp. 66 ff.; Weintraub, "Mickiewicz," p. 177.

39. Desmettre, *Towianski*, pp. 300-2. For Slowacki, who broke with the *Oeuvre de Dieu* after fifteen months, see Falk, "Indian elements," and Lossky, "Three Chapters," pp. 24 ff.

40. Desmettre, *Towianski*, p. 339 and pp. 375-8.

41. Desmettre, *Towianski*, pp. 326-34.

42. Bruno de Jésus-Marie, in *Satan*, p. 267. Anson, *Bishops at Large*, p. 516. In connection with the Mariavites should be noted another Polish Messianic Church—the Polish National Catholic Church (of America), inspired by Francis Hodur, who was greatly affected by the Messianism of Mickiewicz. Hodur was consecrated by the Old Catholics in 1907, Anson, p. 523.

43. Bricaud, *J.-K. Huysmans et le Satanisme*, p. 45, note 1.

44. Weintraub, *Literature as Prophecy* (The Hague, 1959), pp. 5, 53-5, 74-7.

45. But see Edmond Marek, *Destinées françaises de l'oeuvre messianique d'Adam Mickiewicz* (Fribourg, 1945), for the range of Mickiewicz's intellectual contacts. He is said to have inspired George Sand, Lamennais, and Sainte-Beuve. The ridicule was largely confined to the Establishment.

46. Jerzy Braun, *Aperçu de la philosophie de Wronski* (tr. Adam de Lada, Ireland, 1968), p. 9. This is almost the sole comprehensible commentary on Wronski. In the biographical sketch it sins only by omission. For a complete bibliography of the voluminous Wronski literature, see Boleslaw J. Gawecki, *Wronski i o Wronskim* (Warsaw, 1958), where the titles are left in their original languages.

It is impossible to introduce Wronski without quoting some part of his wife's prose-portrait of the philosopher: "Sa taille élevée était d'une perfection sculpturelle. . . . Sa tête était remarquablement grande. . . . Ses grands et beaux yeux slaves, d'un bleu tour à tour clair et doux comme le ciel . . . un nez qui allait fort bien à son visage, et dont les narines so gonflaient avec

force dans ses moments d'indignation contre le mal et l'erreur." (From the *Portrait of Wronski* by Mme. Veuve Wronski—née S. de Montferrier—and bound with Lazare Augé, *Notice sur Höene Wronski*, Paris, 1865, p. 190.)

47. Braun, *Aperçu de Wronski*, pp. 15-17.

48. Christian Cherfils, *Un essai de religion scientifique* (Paris, 1898), pp. 170-92.

49. Paul Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi* (Paris, 1926), p. 132, quoting Lévi's correspondence.

50. Erdan, *La France mystique*, vol. II, p. 16.

51. P. J. Arson, *Document pour l'histoire des grands fourbes qui ont figuré sur la terre* (Paris, 1817-18), p. 5.

52. Höene-Wronski, *Le Sphinx*, no. 1 (Paris, December 1818), p. 42.

53. Arson, *Appel à l'humanité* (Paris, 1818).

54. Arson, *Appel à l'humanité*, passim; Viatte, *Les Sources occultes*, vol. II, pp. 254-61, and cf. Robert Amadou, *Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin et le Martinisme* (Paris, 1946), p. 44. Viatte thinks this group was the *Société de la morale chrétienne* which combined Swedenborg with Martinism. At least in public, Wronski remained resolutely opposed to all secret societies, and in particular to the Martinists whom he stigmatized as purveyors of false knowledge. However, it is certain that he studied magic and the Cabala, and it is possible that he had imbibed the same Martinist doctrines as his fellow Poles, in which case (a common one with occultists) his public face would be sheer dissimulation. We remain in Arson's dilemma.

55. Höene-Wronski, *Sur l'Imposture publique des savans* [sic] *à privileges* (London, 1822), p. vi.

56. *Deposition made under oath by an Ecclesiastic to attest the Spoliation of a learned Foreigner by the British Board of Longitude* (London, 1822), p. 8. Deposition made 14 November 1821. Such is Wronski's diligence in lobbying that one wonders which Archbishop this was!

57. Lazare Augé, *Documents pour l'histoire du Messianisme* (Paris, 1868).

58. *Deposition . . . by an Ecclesiastic*, p. 8. Braun, *Aperçu de Wronski*, p. 11. Höene-Wronski, *Nouveaux systèmes de machines a vapeur, fondés sur la découverte des vrais lois des forces mécaniques* (Paris, 1834-5), pp. vi-vii. Höene-Wronski, *Urgente réforme des chemins de fer et de toute locomotion*

terrestre (Paris, 1844). For the Commission, see pp. 6-7; for M. Thayer, p. 67.

59. V.-E. Michelet, *Preface* to *Eliphas Lévi*, pp. xiv-v.

60. Hœne-Wronski, *Secret politique de Napoléon* (Paris, 1840), p. 115.

61. Hœne-Wronski, *Document historique (secret) sur la révélation des destinées providentiales des nations slaves* (Metz, 1851), passim. Towianski, also, extended his Messianism to include all Slav peoples.

62. Lossky, "Three Chapters," p. 1, where he translates "country" Cf. Braun, *Aperçu de Wronski*, p. 12, who has French "*terre*"—much more suitable for an expiring prophet. J.-E. Croegaert, *Notice sur l'oeuvre inachevée de la Téléologie Messianique* (Paris, 1891). Rolland de Reneville, "Sciences maudites," pp. 173-8. Croegaert, *Notice*, p. 9, note 1. August Prost, *Notice sur le Comte Camille Durutte* (Metz, 1884), p. 24, note 1.

63. Eliphas Lévi, *History of Magic* (4th edition of A. E. Waite's translation, London, 1938), pp. 74-8.

64. Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, p. 129.

65. Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, quoting correspondence, p. 83 and note 2.

66. Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, pp. 132-5; cf. Lévi, *History of Magic*, pp. 330-31.

67. Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, pp. 192-9.

68. Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, p. 217.

69. Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, pp. 259-60.

70. Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, pp. 215-16.

71. Senior, *The Way Down and Out*, pp. 74-88, sees de Nerval's hanging himself as the working out of his self-selected role—the Hanged Man in the Tarot pack.

72. Jean Richer, *Gérard de Nerval et les doctrines ésotériques* (Paris, 1947), pp. 26-9 and pp. 101-3.

73. Robert Dreyfus, *Alexander Weill* (Paris, 1901), pp. 23-4.

74. Goldsmith, *Mesmer*, pp. 181-2. The Abbé believed that the attitude of his patient affected the cures: that success, in fact, was a matter of suggestion.

75. Viatte, *Victor Hugo et les illuminés de son temps* (Montreal, 1942), p. 18.

76. Viatte, *Victor Hugo*, p. 110.

77. Senior, *The Way Down and Out*, p. 88.

78. Viatte, *Victor Hugo*, pp. 107-9.

79. Jacob P. van der Linden, *Alphonse Esquiros* (Paris, 1848), pp. 26-32.

80. Alphonse Esquiros, *Le Magicien* (Paris, 1838). The novel is said to have greatly affected Baudelaire (Van der Linden, *Esquiros*, p. 157).

81. Lévi, *History of Magic*, p. 343.

82. Henri Delaage, *Doctrines des sociétés secrètes* (Paris, 1852), which contains sections on the Mysteries of Isis—which never existed—Mithras, primitive Christianity, the Templars, magnetism, phrenology, etc.; the sentence referred to occurs pp. 7-8. Delaage seems to have been a member of the Grand Orient—see his *Voix prophetiques* (Paris, 1853), p. 117—and Esquiros was also a Mason, but whether of an occult Order or not I do not know.

83. *The Magical Ritual of the Sanctum Regnum, interpreted by the Tarot Trumps, translated from the MSS of Eliphas Lévi* (ed. W. Wynn Westcott, London, 1896), p. 105.

84. Westcott, *Sanctum Regnum*, p. 102.

85. Constant was always against any practical magic. His one famous attempt at this—the conjuring up of the spirits of Apollonius of Rhodes, John, and Joshua—is quite interesting. Joshua gave the Magus "the book of the Rabbi Inaz," taught him magic, and commanded him to "honor the (Cabalistic) crown, the polar vestment (clothing?) and the ceremonies of the L.'.E.'.G.' ". Whatever the "polar clothing" might have been, it is possible that L.'.E.'.G.'. stands for L'Eglise (Evangelique) Gallicane. There were several little churches to which this could apply—that of the Abbé Chatel, or the Abbé Houssaye. The whole, together with Constant's clerical antecedents, points to the influence of unorthodox clerics already touched on in Chapter 4.

86. Wirth, *Stanislas de Gautta*, p. 92.

87. Michelet, *Les compagnons*, p. 9.

88. Léon Cellier, *Fabre d'Olivet* (Paris, 1953), is an exhaustive analysis of all aspects of Fabre's thought.

89. Fabre d'Olivet, *The Hebraic Tongue Restored* (tr. N. L. Redfield, London and New York, 1921, first pub. 1815).

90. Cellier, *Fabre d'Olivet*, p. 361.

91. Cellier, *Fabre d'Olivet*, pp. 93-4.

92. Cellier, *Fabre d'Olivet*, pp. 112-82.

93. Encausse, *Papus*, p. 29.

94. "Barlet," *Saint-Yves d'Alveydre* (Paris, 1910), p. 4.

95. See Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, *L'Archéomètre* (2nd edition, Paris, 1935).

96. Papus, Foreword to *L'Archéomètre*, p. 1.

97. Bois, *Le monde invisible*, pp. 35-9.

98. Cellier, *Fabre d'Olivet*, p. 385. Claire Vautier, née Vigneau, of the Paris Opera, was born 1850 at La Rochelle, and published three novels.

99. Claire Vautier, *Monsieur le Marquis* (Paris, 1886), p. 2.

100. Vautier, *Monsieur le Marquis*, pp. 59 ff.: it is interesting to compare Georgette Leblanc's account of how she met Maeterlinck at a similar salon; also to remember that she herself was on the stage and that to her own salons in Paris came Péladan and the Rosicrucians. See Georgette Leblanc, *Maeterlinck and I*, (tr. J. Flanner, London, 1932), pp. 23-4.

101. Vautier, *Monsieur le Marquis*, pp. 134-5. Cellier, *Fabre d'Olivet*, pp. 385-8. See Michelet, Preface to Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, p. xv. Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, pp. 136-9.

102. Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, *Mission de l'Inde en Europe* (Paris, 1910), pp. 27 ff. Cellier, *Fabre d'Olivet*, pp. 111-13.

103. See Ellic Howe, *Urania's Children* (London, 1967), for the late 19th-century revival; pp. 50 ff. (for Britain); pp. 72-82 (for France and Germany).

104. Carl Kiesewetter, *Die Geschichte des neueren Occultismus*, part II, *Die Geheimwissenschaften* (Leipzig, 1891), p. 233.

105. Bois, *Le monde invisible*, pp. 44-6.

106. Kiesewetter, *Die Geschichte des neueren Occultismus*, part II, p. 235; Bois, *Le monde invisible*, pp. 46-9.

107. Isabelle de Steiger, *Memorabilia* (London, 1927), pp. 237-8. For an exposition of alchemy (of a sort) by a 20th-century alchemist, see Fulcanelli, *Les demeures philosophales*, 3rd edition (ed. E. Canseliet, Paris, 1965).

108. For the Golden Dawn, see Francis King, *Ritual Magic*, and Ellic Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*. Michelet, *Les compagnons*, p. 26. Cf. Amadou, *Saint-Martin*. Hugo Rahner, "The Christian Mystery and the Pagan Mysteries" (1944), in *The Mysteries* (ed. Campbell), pp. 339 ff.

109. W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (London, 1899), p. ix. Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. viii and pp. 349 ff. For Inge himself, see Adam Fox, *Dean Inge* (London, 1960). King, *Ritual Magic*,

pp. 111-12. For Mulford, see e.g. his *The Gift of the Spirit* (ed. and intro. A. E. Waite, London, 1898).

110. An interesting discussion of Schuré and his sources is Lucien Roure's *La légende des 'Grands initiés'* (Paris, 1926), which even bears the Imprimatur—an indication of Schuré's own enormous success.

111. *Edouard Schuré, Le rêve d'une vie* (Paris, 1928), pp. 175-6.

112. King, *Ritual Magic*, p. 48, note 2.

113. Anna Bonus Kingsford, *Dreams and Dream-Stories* (London, 1888), pp. 16-17.

114. Edward Maitland, *Life of Anna Kingsford* (London, 1896), vol. I, p. 60.

115. Maitland, *Anna Kingsford*, vol. I, p. 454.

116. Maitland, *Anna Kingsford*, vol. II, p. 158, quoting Augustine.

117. Maitland, *Anna Kingsford*, vol. II, p. 178.

118. See her *Le secret du nouveau Testament* (Paris, 1896), pp. 496 ff.: a "communication d' en haut" received at Holyrood House in Edinburgh.

119. Maitland, *Anna Kingsford*, vol. I, p. 434.

120. Maitland, *Anna Kingsford*, vol. II, p. 91.

121. See *The New Gospel of Interpretation*, manifesto of Esoteric Christian Union (London, 1892).

122. See Annie Besant, *Esoteric Christianity* (Adyar, 1914).

123. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 398-9, note 2. The Theosophical Society from its very beginning had included exponents of the Traditions in its membership. Of the sixteen founder-members who with Olcott and H. P. B. made up the first New York Theosophical Society, four may have had connections with Traditional thought. Beyond doubt is the alchemical bent of the "color-therapist" Dr. Seth Pancoast of Philadelphia, who also seems to have been learned in the Cabala and the theory of magic. He did not "proceed to the praxis" despite the encouragement of H. P. B. George Felt, the engineer who gave the opening lecture of the Society on *The Lost Canon of Proportion of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans*, may also have been interested in Traditional matters. A certain Portuguese Jew called de Lara, described as "a learned old gentleman," is an obvious suspect for possessing Traditional knowledge. Beside Pancoast can be set Emma Hardinge Britten, the famous Spiritualist medium, who

was advertising a book called *Art Magic* about the time of the formation of the TS; and she wrote to Olcott, pointing out that the book anticipated whatever Cabalistic doctrines might be evolved by the new Society. Mrs. Britten falsely claimed that the book had been written by a European adept of her acquaintance, the Chevalier Louis Constant. See Ransom, *Theosophical Society*, pp. 110-15.

124. For history of British Israel, see John Wilson, "British Israel," in *Patterns of Sectarianism*, ed. Bryan Wilson (London, 1967); cf. also Hyamson, *The Lost Tribes*.

125. Bila, *La croyance à la magie*, p. 85.

126. W. Lutoslawski, *Un grand initiateur, Adam Mickiewicz (Geneva/Basle, 1902)*.

127. For a description of the process, see Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art* (London, 1951), vol. I, pp. 322 ff. R. & M. Wittkower, *Born under Saturn* (London, 1963), pp. 85 ff. Jean Gimpel, *The Cult of Art* (London, 1968), pp. 36-8. An interesting attack on what the author conceives as the false position of art in society. Weintraub, *Literature as Prophecy*, p. 9.

128. Pierre Geyraud, *Les petites églises de Paris* (Paris, 1937), p. 77. Alec Mellor, Preface to Le Forestier, *Le Franc-maçonnerie*, p. 19. Geyraud, *Les petites églises*, p. 83. Fabre des Essarts was also on good terms with the Abbé Houssaye (or Hussay), primate of the Eglise Catholique Française, or Eglise Gallicane (see note 85 above), consecrated by Vilatte, and who wrote on magical subjects under the name of the Abbé Julio. See Fabre des Essarts, "Biographie de l'Abbé Houssaye," in Gaston Bourgeat and l'Abbé Julio, *L'Empire du Mystere* (Paris, 1910), pp. 306-8. Cf. Anson, *Bishops at Large*, pp. 306-8. Geyraud, *Les petites églises*, pp. 77 ff. Fabre des Essarts, *Les hiérophantes* (Paris, 1905), pp. 296-7.

129. T. Sophronius, *Catéchisme explique de l'Eglise Gnostique, apprové par sa grâce Synésius, Patriarche Gnostique, etc.* (Paris, 1899), p. 12. The "T" represents the Greek Tau Cross, which the new Gnostics adopted as their episcopal insignia.

130. T. Sophronius, *Catechisme explique*, p. 67.

131. T. Synésius, *L'Arbre Gnostique* (Paris, 1899), p. 10 and note 1.

132. Synésius, *L'Arbre Gnostique*, p. 11.

133. Cf. Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, Epilogue, "Gnosticism, Nihilism and Existentialism," pp. 320 ff.

Chapter 8
The Spiritual in Politics

A SENSE of imminent thunderstorm hung over Western civilization. Anxiety induced by change was not limited to the upper or intellectual classes. Despite the Revolution of 1789, it appears that large sections of the population did not recognize their new powers and privileges, and that the new message of the social Millennium was slow to take root in a substantial number of minds. Instead, anxiety—coupled with perhaps a dawning consciousness of still better prospects that only

increased that anxiety—found expression in time-honored fashion. Convulsions, doom, the Second Coming—we have seen how proclamations of a new age formed part of Swedenborg's doctrine, of the Spiritualist message, of the outbreak of the miraculous in 19th-century France. The prophet Vintras had seen Paris in flames. Mélanie Calvet told of the anger of heaven at the continued sinfulness of the earth.

France had been more unsettled than any other European country—if we except annihilated Poland. A Revolution in 1789, a Directory, an Empire, a Restoration in 1814; in 1830 another revolution; twenty-one years later a *coup d'etat* following a revolution in 1848. The prophets who stalked the land turned practical in their prophesying. There arose an exalted school of thought which predicted the restoration of the true monarch to the French throne. After 1848 the Bourbon, or Legitimist, candidate was the Comte de Chambord. But there is detectable a constant search for true legitimacy which expressed itself in terms more unorthodox than support for displaced royalty. It was natural for sections of the clergy to ally themselves with a return to ancient systems of government. It is more surprising to find supernatural sanction for this state of mind.

Mère du Bourg, whose levitatory habits caused her so much embarrassment, saw in the 1848 Revolution the beginning of God's plans for France and in 1857 had visions of the coming disruption of the Empire: "Plagues, troubles, blood will be spilled; in our France there will be dreadful confusions and upheavals." But she saw also the coming of a model Christian king, the "God-given Prince," whom she believed was the Comte de Chambord.[1] St. Jean-Baptiste Vianney, the Curé of Ars, foresaw the restoration of the old order. Certain elements of the Church—such as the Order of the Assumptionists and the Fathers of the Immaculate Conception—preached directly against Republican institutions. By the end of the century, during the period of acute hysteria in which Léo Taxil flourished, the French

National Pilgrimage to Lourdes could be described as "an overtly anti-republican demonstration."[2] The habit of Royalist prophecy was catching. While studying medicine in Paris, Anna Kingsford had a vivid dream of the crowning of the Comte de Chambord; but as the Restoration did not take place, she and Edward Maitland concluded that the vision had been a reflection in the astral light of the *aspirations* of the Legitimists.[3] It is possible that Anna Kingsford had acquired a taste for political mysticism from the eccentric Lady Caithness.[4] If the astral light is ruled out of court, the conclusion would be incontestable that by the end of the century Legitimacy was a subject dear to the hearts of mystics and occultists. That this was so is to a great extent because of an earlier movement of visionary Legitimacy which commanded substantial popular support.

Of all the atrocities of the Terror the crime which might most happily have been forgotten by the very staunchest of Republicans was the murder in the Temple of the child who would, under other circumstances, have become Louis XVII. Perhaps in response to this willingness to absolve the Revolution of infanticide,[5] there arose a clamorous school of thought which maintained that the child-king had in fact escaped from his would-be murderers and was ready to resume his rightful throne. Candidates pressed themselves on a public whose receptiveness can be gauged by its willingness to countenance some absurd deceptions. The first Louis XVII appeared under the Directory. In 1816 the Legitimists discovered "Charles of Navarre," alias Mathurin Bruneau. He was a shoe-maker's son who claimed not only to possess the birth-marks of the murdered Dauphin, but to have a special mark—an "indelible mark representing the Holy Spirit"—which had been branded on him by Pius VI in a ceremony of consecration in the middle of the Papal Conclave.[6]

In October 1834, during the trial of yet another Pretender, Hébert, "Baron of Richemont or Duke of Normandy," a letter was read out in court from a rival claimant

protesting against Hébert's claims. This most daring Louis XVII attracted more attention than any other Pretender. It seems absolutely certain that Karl Wilhelm Naundorff, who called himself the Duke of Normandy and claimed the throne of France, was indeed Karl Wilhelm Naundorff, a Berlin watchmaker who had once been imprisoned for forgery and who (on his arrival in Paris in May 1833) lacked the most rudimentary knowledge of the French tongue.[7]

The Abbé Constant, who had more than a nodding acquaintance with the so-called "Saviors of Louis XVII," traces the origins of mystical belief in the new age of the "God-given Prince" to the sect of the Johannites, which originated in 1772 with the apparition to a certain Loiseaut of John the Baptist, prophesying blood, thunder, and the beheading of kings. After the Revolution the directors of the sect, a Sister Françoise André and a certain Ducy, became obsessed with the idea of Louis XVII and added to the crop of Pretenders some seven or eight of their own.[8] Whether or not the Johannites actually influenced the most important prophet of Louis XVII, they were certainly responsible for adding a mystical element to the hopes of those who sought the real King of France. The chief role in the movement was played, however, by Thomas Martin, a farmer of Gallardon who achieved the prestige of an interview with the *de facto* monarch, Louis XVIII.

Thomas Martin was at work in the fields on 15 January 1816 when he was surprised by a man dressed in a yellow greatcoat, wearing a tall hat, who directed him to go and warn the King that he was in danger. The stranger then levitated and disappeared. Several more visitations occurred during the course of which Martin discovered that the yellow overcoat concealed the archangel Raphael. By dogged persistence he worked his way through a series of interviews with the village *curé*, the bishop, the Prefect of the *Département*, to the Minister of Police in Paris, Decazes, who showed some interest in the seer but confined him to the lunatic asylum of Charenton. It was here (according to the Abbé Constant) that Thomas Martin caught the enthusiasm for Louis XVII from Legros, who had become

the chief prophet of the Johannites and was evidently locked up for his pains.[9] It does not seem, however, that Martin really began to associate his visions with the hoped-for Dauphin until much later.

In Charenton, Martin demonstrated himself completely sane. Gradually the news of his attempts to see the King filtered through to the extreme Royalist party at court, the "Ultras," who, grouped round the King's brother and the Duchess of Angoulême, were frustrated by the necessity of exercising the Royal powers with maximum discretion. Clerics, perhaps from this group, visited the seer in Charenton. Either through these or through Decazes who (as an intimate friend of the King) continually sought to humor him, Louis XVIII was persuaded to grant Martin an interview. At this famous meeting Martin did not—as was afterwards asserted—tell Louis XVIII that the true King of France was still alive. He merely delivered the warning that a certain unnamed man had been deliberately allowed to escape from prison and was conspiring with others against the King's life. Louis seems immediately to have recognized the man intended and, breaking down in tears, swore Martin to secrecy. It has been convincingly argued that the introduction of Martin to the King was a plot of the Ultras to discredit Decazes—who would have been responsible for allowing the escape of the traitor—and that the King's swearing of Martin to secrecy was the result of his wish to keep his friend in office.

At all events, Martin returned to Gallardon with great prestige. It appeared that his visions had been confirmed by authority, and popular superstition romanticized the account of his interview with the King. As early as June 1816 a manuscript account of Martin's audience was circulating in two *départements*, and soon a disciple of Martin's had set up a central office for the distribution of such tracts. Gradually, the cult became too noticeable to be ignored. Martin's bishop was threatened with police action if he did not halt its progress. At this point, Martin apparently become overwhelmed by his following and acquired a taste for glory. He was also deprived of the support of his *curé*

who had approved of him while curbing his worst excesses: the priest was sacked for allowing the cult to grow out of hand.[10]

On 13 February 1820, the Duc de Berry was assassinated in the Opéra and a wave of panic swept France. Thomas Martin, as the prophet of doom to the reigning house, received widespread publicity. A letter simply signed "God" and addressed to the Comtè d'Artois, foretold further danger, declaring that Martin was the Divine spokesman. The prophet was shown off in the salons, attracted the support of the Royalist aristocracy in his neighborhood, and inevitably became subject to the attentions of the Saviors of Louis XVII. Gradually he learned their lesson—the murdered Dauphin would reappear.

Martin came to repeat this message. By 1830 his reputation was such that King Charles X, driven by revolution from Paris but still in a position of strength, is said to have delayed his counterattack until the arrival of a courier with a message from the prophet of Gallardon whom the King had consulted as to the best course of action. The advice of Martin was flight.

By the time of Naundorff's appearance on the scene there was thus a history of fanaticism attached to Pretenders to the throne and widespread popular support for a prophet of the coming Restoration. By a series of not-so-strange coincidences, two of Naundorff's chief supporters encountered a seeress of Martin's following. It was arranged that the prophet meet the Pretender. Martin recognized Naundorff as the King who had been revealed to him in a dream; and around the former watchmaker gathered miraculous occurrences. The prophet discerned a guardian angel for his Louis XVII. His supporters found great comfort in the fact that a hen at Origny laid an egg with the inscription FD 1834. The favored interpretation was "*France délivreé en 1834.*" But, all too soon, Thomas Martin died. His corpse was too dangerous for any of his supporters to handle, and the visionary arrived back at Gallardon after a gruesome series of midnight journeys in a farm-cart.

With his prophet below ground, Naundorff assumed the manners of the seer. He saw visions, performed cures by the laying on of hands, and declared that Martin had been poisoned. His support among both laymen and clergy grew. In June 1836 he sued Charles X and the Duchess of Angoulême in the courts, claiming that he was the rightful King of France. After a short imprisonment he was exiled to England, which received him with equanimity. Naundorff occupied his time in London with constructing infernal machines, in particular the famous "Bourbon Bomb," said to be capable of destroying whole towns, which was tested by the British Army at Woolwich.[11]

There now re-enters the stage another prophet, the producer of miraculous hosts and formerly of cardboard boxes. Eugène Vintras. When he was last considered, it was as a heretic whose miracles and prophecies were very like those of the official Church. He considered himself, however, as the third in succession of a line of popular prophets.

The first was Thomas Martin, The second that Mme. Bouche at whose address in Paris it had been revealed to Vintras that the old man who visited him so mysteriously was the archangel Michael. There is an obvious similarity between the apparitions to Martin and those to Vintras. As for Madame Bouche, she was said to have preached the new gospel to Pius VII and the King of Spain; and she had certainly been maintained at the court of Alexander of Russia from September 1819 to the spring of 1821.[12] It was from Madame Bouche that Vintras claimed to derive his direct succession, irrespective of his divine visitations. There may well have been some connection between Madame Bouche and the Saviors of Louis XVII. But several other explanations have been offered for the fact that Eugene Vintras declared himself unequivocally for Naundorff, whose reign was to inaugurate the new age.

The Abbé Constant prefers the direct explanation:

> In 1839, the Saviors of Louis XVII, who had filled the almanacs with prophecies for 1840, seemed to have assumed

> that if the whole world could be made to expect a revolution, that revolution would not fail to be accomplished; but having no longer their prophet Martin, they set about to secure another. Some of their most zealous agents were in Normandy, of which the pretended Louis XVII claimed to be Duke. They cast their eyes on a devout laborer. . . . [13]

The laborer was Vintras. Constant argues that the old man who appeared to Vintras was an agent of Naundorff; that Vintras admitted having seen him before; and that before disappearing so silently, he left a letter addressed to a Madame de Gèneres in London, placing before Naundorff a definition of the true Catholic religion.[14] This at least is circumstantial, for Madame de Gèneres was a devoted supporter of the Duke of Normandy who had placed herself entirely at his service.[15] As for Naundorff's agent, he has been said to have been one Fernand Geoffroi, a disreputable notary who was arrested with Vintras on the trumped-up charge of 1842.[16]

Stanislas de Guaita says that Naundorff was converted to the doctrine of Vintras and that, as a sort of *quid pro quo*, the prophet of Tilly recognized the Pretender as the Great King who was to come heralded by a mystical figure from Vintrasian theology, Jeanne du Salut.[17] It is not quite true that Naundorff was converted. It was rather that he was pursuing a course similar to that of Vintras. For, inspired by the prophecies of Martin of Gallardon, the self-proclaimed Duke of Normandy had not only taken to seeing visions; he had founded his own religion. In London Naundorff was visited by three angels, whose appearance resulted in his writing his *First Part of the Heavenly Doctrine of Our Savior Jesus Christ*. He steadily developed a theology directed against Rome, with the intention of founding an Evangelical Catholic Church.[18] The date of Naundorff's first theological work was 1839, the same year as the conversion of Vintras. The precise details of the alliance between the *Oeuvre de Misèricorde* and the supporters of the Duke of Normandy, remain unclear. An alliance,

however, there certainly was and the followers of Vintras trumpeted forth the mission of Naundorff as part of their new gospel.

The appearance of Louis XVII was not the dream of the underground alone. Certain highly-placed Churchmen, such as the Bishop of Strasbourg, seem to have held the belief. The idea was, however, often inconvenient. When Mélanie Calvat, to whom had appeared the Virgin at La Salette, took up the cause of Naundorff in adult life, Napoleon III had her shipped off to a Carmelite convent in Darlington.[19] Such a belief, particularly if supported by a popular mystical movement, was by definition anti-establishment. In one aspect, the general expectation of the mystical reign of Louis XVII was just a different aspect of the age-old doctrines of the return of the folk-hero—Arthur, or Charlemagne, or Barbarossa—to save a situation gone to ruin. Such expectations are no different from the doctrines of the Second Coming of Christ. But when a real Pretender appropriated to himself the vestments of a Messiah, the situation became politically dangerous. It is not the effective impotence of Naundorff which is significant so much as the great amount of attention which he received.

Another aspect is important. The Saviors of Louis XVII represent a primitive form of anxiety-response. If such anxiety were felt today, those susceptible might join an extreme socialist group, intent on bringing the Millennium now. The fact that a figure—a hypothetical King—was needed to unite the mystics who assembled under the aegis of Naundorff or one of the other Pretenders, is merely an index of the inability of this group to imagine a change for the better or, indeed, any change at all. The retreat was to a hypothetical Golden Age of True Legitimacy in which none of the worries of the present intruded, every man had his place, and the good God ruled unchallenged in the Heavens. There is a case for regarding the need for a personal figurehead as evidence of the inability for abstract

thought. In the dispensations of the future, the Nation, or the People, came to be the objects of devotion. The age of the Kings—even mystical kings—was ending.

Not that devotion to the People could not be combined with a more personal loyalty. One of the most telling arguments for the political flight from reason is the facility with which one cause was exchanged for another. As long as there was a cause to provide some overall reason for living, the details of its program were comparatively insignificant. In the sect of Jean Simon Ganneau (c. 1800-1853), otherwise known as the Mapah, the aspirations of the Saviors of Louis XVII were combined with a sort of Polish Messianism and the principles of the most extreme socialists of 1848. Ganneau constructed his title of the Mapah from the names "Maman" and "Papa." He announced the union of male and female principles in God; and his God was all humanity, bisexually expressed as the "Evadah"—or the union of Eve and Adam. He greeted the world in ringing tones of joy:

> IN THE NAME OF THE GREAT EVADAH
> IN THE NAME OF THE GREAT GOD,
> *Mother, Father*
> Paris, the Universe
> EXPANSION
> LOVE
> THE MAPAH[20]

The Mapah once told the Abbé Constant in confidence that he was Louis XVI returned to earth, and that his wife was Marie Antoinette. Constant considered him directly in the line of the Saviors of Louis XVII, and he claimed that after the prophet's death his widow remained in a mesmerized state induced by her husband while alive. She believed herself in reality Marie Antoinette; her manners were regal and she treated those seeking to disillusion her with a royal hauteur.[21] But the most interesting elements in Ganneau's teaching bore little resemblance to the seekers after True Legitimacy. Let him speak for himself:

There was a man called Jesus, who arose and said: "*All men are brothers,*" and the people crucified him.
There is a nation called France, which arose and said: "*All men are brothers,*" and the people crucified it.
WATERLOO IS GOLGOTHA-OF-THE-PEOPLE.
WATERLOO IS THE GOOD FRIDAY OF THE GREAT CHRIST-PEOPLE.[22]

Constant describes a vision seen by the Mapah incorporating the same symbolism. Again the day of Waterloo is described as Good Friday, and Saint Helena compared to Golgotha as a name of doom.[23] There is a striking similarity between Ganneau's visions and those of Polish Messianism; and there is a distinct possibility that the Saviors of Louis XVII latterly fused and confused their expectations with the equally apocalyptic doctrine of the Poles. A. E. Waite compares the Messianism of Hoëne-Wronski to the proclamations of Vintras that a new age would dawn with the reign of the God-given Prince.[24] We know definitely that the Poles and the believers of Louis XVII exchanged views; even that the Vintrasian Abbé Charvoz informed Mickiewicz of his sect's belief in the mission of Naundorff.[25] The Mapah is now seen to have combined belief in a Napoleon-Messiah with that in his own identity as Louis XVII. Confusion is confounded, but it is clear that the actual mystic hero does not matter very much—whether the new age is to dawn under a real Louis XVII or the spirit of Napoleon, the Messianic gospel is the same. It was one of Naundorff's trump cards that he possessed the well-known Bourbon profile—but certain of his supporters thought that *he looked very like Napoleon.*[26] The cult of Napoleon was a common Romantic affectation; but nowhere did it take such directly religious form as in the Judaeo-Christian sects of Poland and Russia, of whose views Towianski—whose pilgrimage to Waterloo takes on a fresh significance—and no doubt other Poles as well were the representatives in the West. It is by no means impossible that in the later doctrine of the Mapah is not to be found the strong influence of the Polish Messianists; a theory that gains support from the fact that the Abbé Constant, a known frequenter of Polish

circles, for some time formed part of the group surrounding Ganneau.[27]

But the burden of Ganneau's message was love and brotherhood. His gleanings from the mysticism of Louis XVII or from that of the Poles were subordinated to his socialist principles. To the revolutionaries of 1848 who dreamed of peoples' banking houses, the Mapah announced that the real socialist bank would be the one which would establish a credit for any and every one of a hundred pounds of potatoes.[28] He and his disciples played an interesting part in the Revolution of 1848; and among these disciples were the Abbé Constant and his friend and fellow occultist, Alphonse Esquiros.

It was in 1839—the year after the publication of his *The Magician*, during the period when he, Constant, and Arsene Houssaye were collaborating on *Les Belles Femmes de Paris*—that Esquiros called on his old school-fellow and dragged him off to see the Mapah. They found the prophet in complete destitution. Despite his abrupt manner and ecstatic frothing at the mouth, Ganneau was impressive. It was borne upon them, says Constant, that they too must spread the revolutionary gospel; he adds a caution that enthusiasm is catching.[29] Esquiros, for his part, had been waiting for a social Messiah since 1835.[30] Bluntly, the two young Bohemians were converted. Esquiros, like Ganneau, venerated Napoleon. His patron, Victor Hugo, professed a similar cult.[31] Ganneau at one point tried to incorporate Hugo himself within his system. By some elaborate theological contortions he decided that as he was the Supreme God of France, Victor Hugo ought to be the Holy Spirit of the nation.[32] But if he did not attract the Master, he ensnared the disciples. It should need no emphasis that in the Bohemian opposition to the Powers That Were, politics—especially of a visionary character—could not be excluded. It was not until the 1850s that Constant became Eliphas Lévi, the committed occultist. His chief claim to fame before meeting Wronski was as a mystical Christian socialist and struggling man of letters. Esquiros, on the

other hand, passed through occultism to Ganneau; from Ganneau to effective politics and a seat in the National Assembly. Constant took one road, Esquiros another: both roads led naturally from Bohemia.

Ganneau himself was a well-known figure in Bohemian circles. The Abbé Constant complained that:

> Several young men whose abilities were formed under his inspiration left him, and there are even some who, after his death, have almost disowned their master; others have ridiculed him or allowed him to be ridiculed under the name of the Mapah. . . .[33]

Of this latter charge, the learned Cabalist, Eliphas Lévi, was not himself innocent. But his early days as the spoiled priest and the agitator, Alphonse Louis Constant, could then have been conveniently forgotten.

At the time, however, the watchward was "Revolution." 14 July, the "Christmas Day of the Christ-People"; and there was a sympathetic publisher called Le Gallois, the friend both of Ganneau and Esquiros, who was prepared to risk prosecution by financing the issue of revolutionary tracts. Esquiros composed the *Gospel of the People.* Constant wrote a similar work called *The Bible of Liberty.* The *Gospel of the People* was published in 1840: Esquiros was imprisoned for eight months and fined five hundred francs. Next year, *The Bible of Liberty* was seized one hour after it had been put on sale and the Abbé Constant received a prison sentence of eight months and a fine of three hundred francs. Le Gallois was also imprisoned: all three in the prison of Saint Pelagius where they met another renegade from right order, the Christian Socialist, Lamennais, jailed for a similar offense.[34] When Esquiros was released, he declared his intention of becoming a political poet and set up a short-lived populist newspaper with the socialist, Louis Blanc. Constant emerged from prison only to attempt once more to enter the priesthood. But these aspirations were finally destroyed when he published *The Mother of God* in 1844. This tract was described by one of his superiors as

"celibacy gone to the head." Its author was returned to the streets of Bohemia from which he had escaped. The eve of the 1848 Revolution saw both followers of the Mapah married, in Paris, and still ready for battle.[35]

Physical and bloody revolution exploded on 23 February. The reactionary minister, Guizot, was dismissed that afternoon; but the workers at their barricades in the streets of Paris refused to move until an acceptable successor had been found. From barricade to barricade, writes a historian of the Revolution, ran a young and excitable radical, a man of private means called Marie-Joseph Sobrier. His message was that the fall of Guizot was only the beginning; they must march on the Chamber of Deputies and demand their rights. Eventually, he dropped, exhausted. That evening, a column marched on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where its passage was blocked by troops. A shot went off. The soldiers replied by firing into the crowd and fifty-two people fell dead. This was the beginning of violence, and we are told that numerous stories were concocted to explain the slaughter to the advantage of either side.[36] One of these stories was told by the Abbé Constant, and it seems to have escaped the attention of the historian of political events. It was that the crucial shot had been fired by Sobrier. Sobrier was a disciple of the Mapah.

Constant describes the young man as "nervous and delicate." Under the influence of Ganneau he believed that he was predestined to provoke universal revolution. It was Sobrier, says Constant, who organized the marching column by appearing on the evening of the twenty-third in the Quartier Saint-Martin with a pistol in his belt, a drummer and a linkman. By the time that his column reached the massed troops, Sobrier and his escorts had vanished. But, unseen, he fired his pistol—Constant says on the people—and started the revolution.[37] The story has all the marks of credibility. Youthful fanaticism has before and since been known to rise to such a pitch, and Constant has nothing to gain by telling such a tale—for during the days of 1848 he and Esquiros were close to Sobrier and the

Mapah. It is also incontestable that Sobrier played a further significant part in escalating the Revolution. On 15 May he was at the head of another march, some 20,000 strong, which arrived outside the National Assembly and demanded admittance. The causes of this demonstration were various; but it is significant that the first thought of the group who invaded the Assembly was Poland. Mickiewicz had left Paris on his ill-starred attempt to found a Polish legion to fight Austria in Italy; but his cause retained the rallying power that Viet-Nam's has recently exhibited. The parallel is exact. The mob in the Assembly would hear of nothing but Poland—eventually the talking-shop was dissolved. A provisional government installed itself: its first act was to send an ultimatum to Russia and Germany on the Polish question. The fact that this was not the fundamental cause of the demonstration only emphasizes the importance of Poland as a rallying-cry in revolutionary circles. Once more, Sobrier was heavily involved. He had spent the time since February in his house in the Rue de Rivoli gathering a supply of arms. Before his column set off for the Assembly, he had also printed seven revolutionary decrees to be issued by the provisional government. These were not used; but such preparedness is a weighty argument in favor of accepting Constant's story.[38]

Sobrier is said to have been a police agent and to have been converted to the religion of the Mapah by reading a manifesto of Ganneau's which had been impounded in 1840. It was with another former spy that he had led the march on the Assembly. Having once gone over to the Revolution, he became great friends with Esquiros whom he had met around the Mapah and at the Club Blanqui. Esquiros became vice-president of a Committee, headed by the twenty-three-year-old zealot, for Agriculture and Colonization; they contributed to the same papers. During the months of revolution, both Esquiros and Constant wrote quantities of polemic for the broadsheets which sprang up and withered in a matter of weeks or days. In the Clubs, where revolution in a hundred and one different

guises talked its head off, Bohemia emerged to greet the workers. Constant and Esquiros founded with their publisher, Le Gallois, the Club de la Montagne, composed chiefly of workers and of which the Mapah himself was a member. At the Club des Augustins, Gérard de Nerval and Alexander Weill joined Esquiros. The wives of both Constant and Esquiros spoke at the Club des Femmes of which the future Elphas Lévi was an honorary member. Sometime in 1848, Ganneau and Le Gallois were seen outside the Hôtel de Ville distributing a "meal of solidarity" to the workers. The Mapah handed out bread, crying as he broke it: "THIS IS GOD'S BREAD—NOW GO MAKE BREAD FOR EVERYONE."[39] The Millennium had obviously arrived.

Sometime during the course of 1848, Constant and Esquiros broke off relations. Whether the experience of revolution had soured him, or whether the contradictory impulses in his own nature had to some extent resolved themselves, the Abbé Constant published his last socialist work that July and announced that his social mission had come to an end. He withdrew to more cloistered and scholarly pursuits like painting frescoes and writing a *Dictionary of Christian Literature* for the famous Abbé Migne.[40] He was set on the course which would make of him a Cabalist.

Esquiros, on the other hand, fled to London at the accession of the first post-revolutionary government, returned briefly to sit in the National Assembly of 1850; but was sent into a lengthy exile on the *coup d'état* carried out in 1851 by Louis Napoleon. He abandoned his wife, had at least one child by an Englishwoman, and kept himself by writing travel books on England and the Low Countries. It was only in 1869 that he finally returned to France to edit a radical paper in Marseilles. The next year, with the fall of the Empire, he became supreme administrator and effective dictator of the town, and distinguished himself by abolishing the royalist press and dissolving the Jesuit communities in the areas under his jurisdiction. His actions were repudiated

by the central government. But Esquiros was elected to the National Assembly and died in 1876 after a three-month tenure of a seat in the Senate.[41]

Such were the respective destinies of the disciples of the Mapah. Both had stood in the elections of 1848. But they are remembered not as comrades in arms—unless by occultists. Esquiros ended a politician, yet continued to praise Nature as "Isis, the veiled Goddess."[42] Constant ended as a Magus yet remained faithful to his mystical socialism.[43] As for the Mapah, his disciples melted away, all save one who went mysteriously under the name of *He who once was Caillaux*. His Master does not deserve to be forgotten, this remarkable and holy madman; for his story is an excellent illustration of how a prophet, combining elements of mysticism from various sources, found support among both Bohemian men of letters and more active fanatics. Much of the revolutionary press was controlled by Bohemia,[44] and, as we have seen, its occult elements were not excluded from the hustings. Indeed, because the occultist is necessarily a philosopher—although he may most frequently be a very muddled one—it is difficult to imagine him without political opinions. Even the fantasist, Henri Delaage, had a program of social reform in 1848. He followed the sort of Christian Socialism of Lamennais and proclaimed the necessary enfranchisement of the oppressed classes in the coming Kingdom of God.[45] A later date would see the Gnostic Fabre des Essarts praising the "apostles of '89," the "Titans of '93," and the Christian and Romantic Socialists of the type of Lamennais. Fabre himself was a socialist candidate in 1889 and tended to make speeches judged subversive. In the same breath as he praised his apostles and Titans of socialism, he proclaimed that his friend, Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, was the sole inheritor of their traditions.[46] This is quite simply untrue. But Fabre's remarks were not alone in turning the wheel from occultism to politics and back to occultism again.

Besides learning that the exponents of rejected

knowledge applied their peculiar cast of mind to political problems if given the opportunity, we have discovered that the prophet Ganneau was able to inspire them; and that his doctrines may have come in part from the teachings of the Polish mystics—although there is certainly the possibility that Ganneau was original. But the revolutionaries' use of the Polish question to unite dissident forces within their own ranks provides material for further speculation. The rallying-cry was powerful. The Poles were feted; there were banquets for particular heroes. Let us imagine a "hands-off Viet-Nam" demonstration, with perhaps a delegation from North Viet-Nam among the protesters. The dissidents may, in fact, be protesting against a hundred different things, some are just along for the ride; but others again may absorb the thoughts of Mao. In a similar fashion, it seems likely that the especially Polish doctrine of Messianism was absorbed by revolutionary movements which added the fuel of the Messianic principle to the flame of their native belief in a socialist mission. This may have been the way in which such ideas travelled through the Underground to Ganneau. More on the surface, it is known that Mickiewicz provided Lamennais with a source of inspiration; and that his first act on returning from Italy in 1849 was to become editor of a radical newspaper[47]—this despite his conservative stance on Polish affairs. As for the Polish enthusiast, Constant, he is a good example of a mover in both socialist and Polish circles—the sort of man by whom the fusion of doctrines might be effected. His first Polish pamphlet was published by Le Gallois c. 1845, together with a socialist tract which earned him a thousand franc fine and six months in prison.[48]

And beyond this object-lesson in the diffusion of ideas, away back where the story started we have discovered the movement of the Saviors of Louis XVII, of which Ganneau was perhaps a minor appendage. It was a widespread irrationalist movement which attracted several of the already existing bodies of popular superstition and meddled in politics of an especially ineffectual kind. By virtue of the hindsight of history we can guess that this movement

represents some of the pent-up force of the common people which afterwards found a natural expression in social revolution. Because of indications of mystical demagoguery in the revolution of 1848, we should not be surprised to encounter the irrational or the occult wherever rejected elements of the population rise to a momentary position of strength—which position is normally occupied by the forces of Reason and order.

Friedrich Heer writes:

> There has always been a struggle between "above" and "below" in Europe's inner history. The upper culture of Christianity, educated humanism and rationalism has struggled against a "lower" culture of the masses. This cultural "underground" included both the deeper levels of the individual personality and the customs, manners and faith of the people. During the nineteenth century, which really means the era that ended for Europe in 1945, this struggle entered a new phase. For the first time movements from below broke the surface of the upper culture. Whether these movements were rationalist or irrationalist, spiritualist or naturalist, they were marked by great fanaticism and enthusiasm.[40]

Rationalist revolutionaries have often succeeded in their struggles for power: the irrationalists frequently descend again into oblivion. Because of the eminently "established" character of present-day rationalist revolution, the irrational element in the revolutions from below has remained largely ignored. We have seen something of how popular revolution and the irrational fused in 19th-century France. It is also possible to show that adepts of the irrational have *invented* the course that political movements were to take.

In Britain—supposedly so immune to political extravagance—analogous developments took place toward the end of the century. The main topic of interest is the Celtic Revival of the 1890s. But it will be useful first to glance at a related, though by itself unimportant, movement in order to show that the same conditions prevailed among English mystical and occult thinkers as existed in

France. The flight from reason in politics attracted to such causes the inveterate supporters of rejected knowledge.

This is the Victorian Jacobite movement. It should be said at the outset that this very small group of individualists—it has been reported that the English Legitimists could all have been contained in two or three buses[50]—could never have had any effect upon the conduct of politics. My intention here is merely to use their story to illustrate the sort of forces which were subsequently more effectively welded to a realizable political cause.

Queen Victoria's romantic attachment to the Highlands and to her Stuart ancestors is well known. One of the functions to which she lent her name was an exhibition entitled "The Royal House of Stuart," which was held at the New Gallery in London in 1889. At the head of a list of noble and learned Vice-Presidents, the catalogue lists the President of the exhibition as the Earl of Ashburnham, with the Queen as the Patron. In describing various Jacobite relics on display, the cataloguer does not scruple to refer, for example, to the Old Pretender as James III.[51] This is not surprising for Ashburnham—the fifth Earl (1840-1913), owner of about 24,000 acres in various parts of the British Isles—was a fervent Legitimist. The creed of Legitimacy embraced Jacobites at one extreme, and ranged through various shades of monarchist opinion to those, like Ashburnham, who believed their opinions entitled them to interfere in the internal affairs of foreign powers. For the Jacobite element, the rightful Stuart monarch was Princess Maria Theresa of Modena, wife of Prince Ludwig of Bavaria. She was a decided improvement upon previous 19th-century "Pretenders," whose credibility was even less than some of the candidates for the title of Louis XVII and inspired no fraction of their support. Just before the middle of the century, the two "Sobieski Stuarts" had appeared at the head of a group of drawing-room Jacobites in Edinburgh, claiming to be the descendants of Prince Charles Edward.[52] About the same time, the extravagant lunatic who called himself Marshal-General George Henry de Strabolgie

Neville Plantagenet Harrison, and who traced his pedigree back to Odin, was banned from the British Museum Reading Room for persisting in his claim to be the rightful Duke of Lancaster, "as heir to the whole blood of Henry XI."[33] It was not with Pretenders of this sort that the Legitimists dealt; and, small though they were, they seem to have been serious in their beliefs.

Several Jacobite and Legitimist Associations sprang up in the 1890s and the early years of the 20th century. Some indication of the sort of support attracted can be gained from a list of the editors of *The Jacobite* from 1902 to 1904. A popular novelist, Herbert Vivian, was succeeded in turn by the antiquarian Marquis de Ruvigny et Raineval, C. S. Millard, the bibliographer of Oscar Wilde, and the Reverend Bernard Kelly, a Roman Catholic priest.[34] Other prominent Legitimists included Vivian's friend, Erskine of Mar, and the rabid Jacobite Theodore Napier, who in 1898 revived the old Royal Oak Club of Edinburgh, and during the first twelve years of this century published the *Fiery Cross* to encourage his Cause in the north. Both these Scotsmen played not unimportant roles in the early days of Scottish Nationalism. It is also significant that there were Legitimist groups in Ireland and Wales, as well as Scotland; and that Ashburnham also supported a panacea for governmental reform which he called "British Home Rule," advocating complete devolution of the central government, with a federal capital at Chester.[35] The British Legitimists appear in fact to be a reactionary clique among the rapidly-growing body of agitation for governmental reform, which found a lasting expression in much-trampled Ireland and a less secure but permanent lodgement in the North of the United Kingdom.

It was with reference to Irish politics that the Legitimists were first brought to public notice. On 14 February 1893, the Member for Belfast, East rose in the House of Commons to ask Asquith, as Home Secretary, whether he would not suppress *The Jacobite*, as containing treasonable statements.

Mr. Asquith: "Her Majesty's Government do not propose to give fictitious importance to a foolish and ephemeral craze."
Mr. Johnston: "Is it not a fact that Jacobite clubs are being formed in various parts of the country?"
Mr. Asquith: "I am unable to answer the question."
Mr. W. Redmond (Clare, East): "Has the right honorable Gentleman any information that unless this newspaper is suppressed, the Loyalists of Ulster intend to rise in revolt?"[56]

The House passed on to consider questions of sweated labor and army cadets' servants, and the Jacobites were forgotten. But the fact that their existence could be used as an excuse to belabor the Government on the Irish question shows that they have a certain historical interest. That they were in earnest is shown by the *Firefly* incident. In 1899, the Spanish customs at Arcachon stopped the yacht *Firefly* commanded by a Lieutenant Vincent English of the Royal Navy, and discovered it to be carrying a cargo of Gras rifles on their way to Carlist rebels in Spain. English was Vice-Chairman of the Thames Valley Legitimist Club, and the yacht was chartered by Lord Ashburnham himself.[57] It is not worth detailing the further history of the Legitimists; but a deeper investigation of their membership yields suggestive material.

There is a strong connection between Victorian Legitimacy and the more extreme forms of Anglo-Catholicism. The four founder-members of the Thames Valley Legitimist Club were all members of Dr. Lee's Order of Corporate Reunion.[58] Lee himself was prominent both in that society and in the Order of the White Rose, a body of a similar complexion. In 1888 the Legitimists were forbidden by Cardinal Manning to hold a solemn Requiem Mass organized by Ashburnham in a Catholic church to commemorate the centenary of the death of the Young Pretender. Lee transferred the service to his own church at All Saints, Lambeth, and had distributed at the door a poem he had written in memory of Charles Edward.° The

° The still existing "Society of King Charles the Martyr" was founded at the same period of Legitimist activity—Easter 1894.

following year he sent to the Exhibition at the New Gallery the ring of Charles's brother, the Cardinal Duke of York, which he used in the Order of Corporate Reunion as his own "episcopal" ring.[59] Aelred Carlyle of Caldey Island, who fancied himself as directly in succession to the Earldom of Mar, came early in his life into contact with a certain George Nugee, an Anglican who attempted a revival of the Austin Canons. Nugée's "priory" was in South London and was used by the Order of the White Rose for its meetings.[60] The movement can also be connected with the Catholic reaction. The Thames Valley Legitimists—whose Committee was then composed of eight Anglicans, eight Catholics, and a single Presbyterian—received a letter from Cardinal Rampolla conveying "the choicest blessing of Heaven" from the Pope. The Club, which had inveighed against the Italian government's breach of their agreement to leave Rome a papal city, were informed that "such an act of homage is beyond measure pleasing and acceptable to the august Pontiff."[61]

The Legitimists seem also to have attracted their complement of Theosophists and magicians. In 1896 a tract was published entitled *The Jacobite Doctors: a story of the Second Restoration, by a member of the Legitimist Club.* The author is an obvious Theosophist. A spirit appears prattling of "Devachan"—the Theosophical limbo between incarnations—and astrological references abound. The persistent rumor that C. W. Leadbeater was a Jacobite begins to make sense. The fantasies of the *Jacobite Doctors* include a stirring vision of the landing in England of "Queen Maria IV," and the sudden demise of Victoria and her son Albert, "who both died within three or four days, with the agony of this undreamed of prosperity to the country they had done their best to ruin."[62] It also seems that S. L. MacGregor Mathers, the eccentric Chief of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, was involved in Jacobite politicking; and my attention has been drawn to a passage in the autobiography of Aleister Crowley,[63] who claims to have been involved in a Carlist conspiracy. His biographer ridicules this,[64] but with

knowledge of Ashburnham and the *Firefly* incident nothing seems more likely.

The examination of an apparent backwater of British history has thus led to the discovery of an underground group of no particular influence but subject to public comment, which attracted to itself elements from the perennial underground of rejected knowledge and the anxiety-inspired irrationalist movements of the day. Because of the nature of its cause and the structure of British politics, it was precluded from becoming anything more than an underground group. However, it has already been seen that in France, in 1848, such an Underground became a significant part of a popular movement. If conditions in Britain had been more unsettled, perhaps the Legitimists might have discovered their own vehicle to ride on—even the two or three necessary buses. As it was, irrationalist groups like those involved with the Legitimists, did play a large part in the Celtic Revival of the 1890s; and in doing so made a large contribution to the movement for Irish and Scottish Home Rule.

The Legitimist episode, including as it did Ashburnham's federalism, Irish Jacobites, and Scottish Nationalists, in its way represents on a smaller scale the political and literary awakenings of Scotland and Ireland in the 1890s. The whole development of the Celtic Revival has never been satisfactorily studied. It is useful to set out with two generalizations. The movement—which also embraced Brittany, Cornwall, and Wales, and even the Isle of Man—began as a literary and antiquarian program, although such interest may at first have been stimulated by a concern for injustice or neglect. And it has been the natural concern of hard-headed revolutionaries to eradicate any patronizing or in any sense "romantic" vision of their countries which may be seen as having been foisted on them by indulgent outsiders. This applies both to successful Irish Nationalists and their unsuccessful Scottish counterparts. They overlook one very important fact: that neither

in Ireland nor in Scotland till the Celtic Revival did there exist any "national consciousness" as it has been afterwards understood. For it is difficult to feel a loyalty to a nation which does not exist and, in the case of Ireland, had never existed. The politicians, the men of action—Pearse, de Valera, or Michael Collins—might fight a hard and successful fight against economic and political neglect; but they could not create a nation. The *idea* of the nation was created by men whom the man of action despised, although the *fact* might be without meaning to them.[65] Both men of action and prophets are needed for a successful nationalist revolution. Without the prophets, the fighters would not find sufficient support. The Scottish and Irish Nationalists found their vision of a nation in the by now much-despised literary men of the Celtic Revival.

Prophets and politicians alike drew much of their inspiration from the work of the folk-lorists. Folk-lore as a learned pursuit was part of the widespread European urge to employ the newly-forged weapons of scientific criticism in tabulating and analyzing every scrap of data bearing on the environment of mankind in space or time. The word "folk-lore" was first used in 1846; by 1878 a group of private scholars had founded a Folk-Lore society.[66] The ensuing flurry of collectors and classifiers of rural custom implies in part more or less detached scientific interest; but also seems to argue a flight from the trials of life in the 19th century, an attempt to tabulate and arrange the past to compensate for the disarray of the present, or a wish to conserve a sense of continuity with centuries from which the common sensation of dislocated tradition threatened an ever-widening removal. If not the motives of the researchers, at least the enthusiasm of their public contained large elements of nostalgia and withdrawal. It was during the activity of the first Celtic folk-lorists that the cult of Romantic Celticism set in. Its supporters tried to disguise it as a reaction against "Decadence"—but in reality it was much more "decadent" than the art of those to whom the term was usually applied.

The earliest Celtic folk-lorists were the Scots—Sir Walter Scott himself, in correspondence with Grimm and heavily influenced by the Romantic aesthetic of Gothic horror; Anne MacVicar Grant (1755-1838) who published two volumes on the superstitions of the Highlands;[67] after her a series of lesser publications until the two great collections of John Campbell of Islay (1860) and Alexander Carmichael, whose *Carmina Gaedelica* was published in 1900. In Wales, Sir John Rhys, the first Professor of Celtic at Oxford, failed to land the rich haul of oral tradition that was the lot of his Scottish and Irish contemporaries.[68] In Ireland, the lesser figures (like the parents of Oscar Wilde) yielded pride of place to Standish O'Grady and Douglas Hyde, the latter of whom founded the Gaelic League in 1893 and became the first President of Republican Ireland. As the accumulation of data proceeded, the historian of the British folk-lorists notes, attitudes of local pride became frankly separationist.[69]

But as well as stimulating a latent feeling for independence, folk-lore collection gave a strange picture of the minority cultures of Britain. Because of the subject-matter of the material collected, the Celtic peoples came to be associated with witches, hob-goblins, and the evil eye. The folk-lorists themselves encouraged this association. 1901 saw the issue of a work from the manuscripts of Campbell of Islay on witchcraft and second sight; the next year, a book on the evil eye in the West Highlands, by Robert Maclaren. In Ireland, Douglas Hyde published books of fairy-tales in the early 1890s; and at the end of the decade W. B. Yeats did the same.[70] From a supposedly scientific standpoint, Andrew Lang—who was both folk-lorist and psychical researcher—combined his two enthusiasms, applying the methods of folk-lore classification to stories of ghostly compacts, or insisting that the evidence of psychic research could be supplemented by collections of superstitions.[71] The Society for Psychical Research appointed in 1894 one Ada Goodrich Freer to take charge of their own investigation into second sight in the Highlands. Miss Freer was a spirit medium who did not scruple to

publish the folk-lore collections of others under her own name. By the Gaelic-speaking she was known as *Cailleach bheag nam Bocan*, the lady who is preoccupied with ghosts.[72] This preoccupation with ghosts and the supernatural was to give a decidedly "occult" cast to the popular picture of the Celtic regions; and it was inevitable that occultists proper played a part in the Celtic Revival. For as well as stories of the supernatural, the pursuit of folk-lore gave the impression of a certain "hidden wisdom" in its description of the traditions of peasant cultures which knew no rapid changes and possessed a rich store of riddling proverbs and gnomic inherited tales. In 1877, for example, the prophecies of Kenneth Mackenzie of Lewis, the "Brahan Seer," were translated and took their place on the occult bookshelf, along with the predictions of Nostradamus and the Prophecy of Orval.

W. B. Yeats gave this misleading and romantic impression of the Celtic races a powerful sanction in his slim volume of 1893, *The Celtic Twilight*, under which name the Celtic spirit has often been maligned. But then Yeats was an occultist first, and a nationalist second. The other most important figure in projecting the spirit of the Celtic Twilight was no nationalist at all. This was the split personality who wrote under the names of William Sharp and Fiona Macleod. In 1900 the latter temporized: "But above all else it is time that a prevalent pseudo-nationalism should be dissuaded. I am proud to be a Highlander, but I would not side with those who would 'set heather on fire.' "[73] The storm of protest which met this statement of the beloved "Fiona" when it first appeared in print is one of the better arguments for the influence of the men of letters on the rising nationalist movements. Whether or not they intended their writings to have the effect they did, they were soon submerged by the clamor of their over-zealous supporters. The reason was that while the men of action could mobilize active resistance or political parties, the occultists, by virtue of their peculiar temperament, could manufacture nations out of dreams.

At the house of Edward Dowden in Dublin, W. B. Yeats first heard of A. P. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*, a book which he introduced to his schoolfriend, Charles Johnston, who immediately became enthused. Johnston travelled to London to meet Sinnett, and returned in 1886 to transform his Dublin group of esotericists into a Lodge of the Theosophical Society. Johnston was a committed Theosophist—he married Madame Blavatsky's niece. But, of the group associated with him, the two who were to have the most impact upon society at large were Yeats himself and George Russell (A.E.), a mystic who retained a more Theosophical outlook than Yeats. From this group, much influenced by the romantic musings of Standish O'Grady on the Druid-haunted past of Irish history, emerged a concept of nationalism which was to be profoundly influential.[74]

Yeats travelled his own road through occultism. He left Theosophy for the Golden Dawn into which he was initiated in 1890 and whose Visible Head, Samuel Lidell Mathers, created himself Count MacGregor of Glenstrae and took to wearing full Highland dress.[75] Though he later tended to despise Mathers for his charlatanism, Yeats came through him to the Cabala and the thought of the Traditions: indeed it is impossible to consider his mind apart from his occult preoccupations. And if the men of letters were indeed influential in the growth of nationalism, so were their preoccupations. The posing of Mathers in kilt and doublet shows that the occult circles in which Yeats moved were susceptible to Celtic Romanticism. The presence of Yeats in the Golden Dawn demonstrates that at least one serious protagonist of the Celtic Revival was not averse to associating himself with "charlatans" for the sake of what they could teach him. The nature of this unlikely-seeming kinship must be left in abeyance; it is sufficient that the alliance existed.

On his own account, Yeats was so taken with the idea of an Irish spiritual elite that he and Maud Gonne projected a "Castle of Heroes" to be formed on an island in Lough

Key. Here could come the battered heroes of Ireland to take part in Druidical ceremonies and return refreshed to the national struggle. After his experiences in the Golden Dawn he decided to found an Irish Order, and spent much time trying to devise rituals for it which would have the correct symbolic import. His collaborators in this experiment were Mathers, Maud Gonne, Lady Gregory, his uncle George Pollexfen, A.E., and William Sharp, who collapsed during the occult experiments that were found necessary.[76] Thus, in the mind of Yeats, his nationalism was in no way divorced from the occultism. The two enthusiasms complemented each other. This is not the place to attempt any discussion of the occult and Traditional sources of Yeats,[77] all that is necessary to recognize is that his was a nationalism not necessarily of this world, which applied itself in his plays and poetry to the task of reconstructing an Ireland of the imagination; and that it was this Ireland—naturally similar to the popular conception produced by the folklorists—which provided one of the few coherent images of what was meant by "the Irish nation."

With A.E. the same fusion of occultism and nationalism took place. The young Theosophist proceeded from philosophical to practical mysticism under the tutelage of an American called James Morgan Pryse. Pryse had been born the son of a Welsh Presbyterian minister in Ohio, and after an early life spent wandering through America he engaged in different occupations, arrived in London in 1890 to take up residence at the London Headquarters of the Theosophical Society where he operated the printing press.[78] With Violet North, his assistant—whom A.E. afterwards married—he brought the press over to Ireland in 1894 to bring out the *Irish Theosophist*. The newcomer soon obtained a great hold over Russell, and began instructing him in magical practices.[79] Pryse was of a type most uncommon in the Theosophical Society, belonging more to the semi-learned and practical traditions of Western occultism than to the woolly misunderstandings of Eastern philosophy common among Theosophists. He was

an esoteric Christian—so esoteric that he regarded the New Testament as the record of a Greek Mystery religion which had been perverted by Jewish meddling. Pryse had enough Greek to attempt the restoration.[80] He taught A. E. both his esoteric doctrine and practical methods of seership, by which the Irishman was soon able to see the Fairy Host and the spirits of his native land. As Pryse said of his pupil: "He can do the sidereal all right!"[81]

The process by which A.E. began to see the figures which he incorporated in his visionary paintings, and which inspired his peculiar brand of nationalism, is described by Pryse as a stage in which he called "the perfective work." This is the journey of the soul toward the Divine. All visions seen on the way are mere incidentals to the great ascent. When this—let us call it meditation—is seriously undertaken, first the "psychic colors" become visible, blending into pictures. Then "animated beings" appear, including the spirits of the dead and Nature-spirits. These should be avoided, and the soul should steadfastly make its way through even higher orders of spirit toward its goal.[82] A.E. seems to have lingered too long in the territory of the Nature-spirits. As he wandered through Donegal or dreamed around Dublin, the spirits of Ireland pressed about him. Convinced as he was that "Ireland was known long ago as the Sacred Island. The Gods lived there . . . *men who had made themselves Gods* by magical or Druidical power."[83] A.E. found in the visions induced by Pryse the confirmation that the powers which had inspired old Ireland were ready once more to break out.

> Dear children of Eire, not alone to the past, but to today belong such destinies . . . In that mystic light rolled round our hills and valleys hang deeds and memories which yet live and inspire. The Gods have not deserted us. Hearing our call they will return. A new cycle is dawning and the sweetness of the morning twilight is in the air. We can breathe it if we can but awaken from our slumber.[84]

In 1897 he joined the organization of Sir Horace Plunkett who saw in the poet and mystic a "Buddha of Compassion" who willingly turned his back on heavenly things to serve

the world.[85] Plunkett professed a sort of mystical patriotism which found practical expression in his efforts to form the hopelessly uneconomic small farms of Ireland into cooperative units. A.E. now had the opening into national affairs that was granted Yeats by reason of his eminence as a poet. In the early years of the century the two gained further platforms, Yeats with his Abbey Theatre, and A.E. with his editorship of the *Irish Homestead.* The National Literature and the National Spirit which they cherished together with their personal mysticism began to move independently of the men of letters. In 1916 occurred the Easter Rising. That year, A. E. published *The National Being,* dedicated to Plunkett, which contains the kernel of his nationalism. The state, he declared, "is a physical body prepared for the incarnation of the soul of a race." His characterization of Celtic Nationalism is acute:

> Nations rarely, if ever, start with a complete ideal. Certainly we have no national ideals, no principles of progress peculiar to ourselves in Ireland, which are a common possession of our people. National ideals are the possession of a few people only. Yet we must spread them in wide commonality over Ireland if we are to create a civilization worthy of our hopes.[86]

If they were not successful in this task, thought A. E., "we shall only have achieved the mechanism of nationality, but the spirit will have eluded us."[87] If there existed any "national spirit" in Ireland at the time of the Rising it was to a large extent formed by the mystical elements gathered by Yeats and A. E. around the concept "Ireland." If there was none, the whole saga of Rising, Independence, and Civil War was nothing but a continuation of party politics by other means. The enthusiasm generated by a national cause hangs on that one word "national," and the enthusiasm of the two occultists had done much to create a meaning for that word. If the association of the occult with nationalism stopped with Yeats and A.E., there would not be a strong enough case to allow the argument to stand. But this combination is one of the strangest consistencies of modern history.

In Scotland the 1890s saw the attempted creation of a "national spirit" from similar materials to those to which Yeats and A. E. put their hands. It is not generally realized that the agitation on the Irish question was accompanied by a similar growth in the demand for Scottish self-government. In 1885 the first Scottish Office was established with a Secretary of State at its head; the next year the first Scottish Home Rule Association was founded and, in 1888, the newly-formed Scottish Labour Party adopted Home Rule as one of the planks in its platform. The first Parliamentary resolution on Home Rule was moved in 1889 and an annual Bill became regular till 1895. Subsequent Bills were introduced until the Irish troubles erupted in 1920, with that of 1913 passing its second reading by 204 votes to 59.[88] Of militant nationalists in the late nineties, John Stuart Blackie, John Wilson of the *Scottish Patriot*, and the flamboyant Jacobite Theodore Napier are notable figures. History has forgotten them, whereas it remembers their Irish counterparts whose militance and more real sense of grievance aroused a physical revolution. It must also be admitted that Scotland had been much more absorbed into the structure of Britain than had Ireland; and that the efforts of a small band of believers could conveniently be regarded as picturesque lunacy. Napier, for example, was an indefatigable layer of wreaths—at Culloden, Fotheringay, even the grave of MacIan of Glencoe on Saint Munda's Island in Loch Leven. No remotely evocative site escaped his attentions. He gathered crowds wherever he chose to perform his ceremonies, was a leading member of the first Home Rule Association, and one of the first to advocate a Scottish National Party. But neither he nor his colleagues managed to establish such a group,[89] or excite more than a limited interest among their compatriots.

The work of recreating a Scotland in the mind was begun by William Sharp and the circle surrounding Patrick Geddes in Edinburgh. Sharp is nowadays held in contempt—and no doubt rightly—for foisting a sham Celticism on Scottish culture. But the unpleasant fact is that

it was a similar Anglo-Celtic and, as I have tried briefly to indicate, *occult-Celtic* concept of nationality that provided the Irish with any common ground they possessed. Sharp was an occultist. The thought of Geddes took him close to Traditional ideas and at least one of his Edinburgh group—the artist, John Duncan—came of the same stock. William Sharp (1885-1905) is better known under his pen-name of "Fiona Macleod"; and it was Fiona who was one of the leading spirits in the Celtic Revival in Scotland.

The young literary man, Sharp, the friend of Rossetti and acquaintance of Whitman, became Fiona by degrees. In 1892, Sharp published *The Pagan Review* with the motto, "Sic transit gloria Grundi"; but soon passed from mere rebellion into occult regions like those Yeats travelled. As Fiona he corresponded with Yeats and A.E. in a disguised hand on literary matters. As Sharp, he corresponded with Yeats on occult subjects and carried out experiments with him. His occult affiliations remain unclear, although he had as a guru a certain Dr. John Goodchild, described by Sharp's wife as a mystic and archaeologist, of whom the only story recorded is of a rather unsatisfactory prediction made during the course of a visit to Glastonbury.[90] Goodchild's published writings show him an occultist of delightful eccentricity. He had discovered a form of Western Gnosticism displaced by Christianity, whose symbols he pursued with a method familiar to readers of Margaret Murray. After Culloden, (Goodchild declares) a Gnostic jewel was found in the baggage of the defeated Prince. The *Amen* of the Christian church service is "the most sacred word of the Celtic teachers," AMEEN.[91] He seems also to have sustained exalted ideas about the destiny of initiates:

> Shall those that live obedient here
> And live the love that casts out fear,
> Walk yonder 'neath Thy crown of thorn,
> *The Christs of planets yet unborn*
> Which far beyond our thought extend,
> For service of life's endless end?

Under such inspiration Sharp, in his guise of Fiona, produced the series of Celtic romances which earned him popularity—in his last impoverished days a pension from the Civil List was secured for him on the strength of a purely verbal assurance that he was "Fiona Macleod."[93] In the autumn of 1894 he met Patrick Geddes, the remarkable Professor of Botany at Dundee, who lived in Edinburgh and concerned himself with everything but pure botany. Geddes' achievements in sociology, slum-clearance, and particularly in the business of collecting scholars and students for his "Summer Schools" are intriguing in themselves. His thought was mystical, symbolic, and emphasized the organic unity of human existence.[94] He was also a fervent Scottish patriot. Geddes was therefore keen to combine "Celticism" in his synthesis. The firm of Patrick Geddes and Colleagues was established to publish Fiona Macleod and other Celtic writers. In 1896 Sharp and his wife issued under its auspices *Lyra Celtica*, an anthology of Celtic verse which included Manx, Breton, and Cornish contributions. At Geddes's Summer Schools there were lectures on Celtic ornament and Hebridean folk-song. Notably, the group surrounding Geddes produced *The Evergreen*, an elaborate magazine which ran during 1895 and 1896, containing contributions from Scottish and non-Scottish Celtic writers, decorated with astrological signs and symbolic pictures in a style much favored by Geddes, such as that by the ardent Nationalist sculptor and artist Pittendrigh MacGillivray, entitled *Der Zeitgeist*, confounding obelisks, pyramids, the Sphynx, Christ crucified, an angel, a flaming torch, a sickle, and the rising sun.[95]

Also contributing to *The Evergreen* was John Duncan, an artist who painted Celtic themes in a style "consciously borrowed" from the Italian Primitives and Puvis de Chavannes.[96] This choice of technique is immediately suggestive to one familiar with the artistic preferences of Péladan's Rosicrucians. Duncan was a great friend and a travelling companion of William Sharp; and he painted his fairy figures *from memory*. Duncan began to see the fairy-

folk while staying on Iona—but always obliquely. He felt he was at a turning-point, and could at any minute leave the everyday world for that of "Faery." With a superhuman effort he tore himself away but continued to express his visions in his work.[97] The Celtic Renaissance proclaimed by Geddes was no less infused by the occult than the Irish literary revival. While it would be easy, by detailed analysis of *The Evergreen* and other productions of the Geddes group, to pile example on example of occult thinking, it is more useful to glance briefly at later Scottish Nationalism.

If the crowning event for an Irish Nationalist was secession from the United Kingdon, the Scottish Nationalists have not yet achieved their goal. Their most lasting achievement has been the establishment of a political party. This occurred in the late 1920s when Erskine of Mar—who had edited a magazine with Herbert Vivian, the Legitimist, and retained his monarchical principles to the end[98] —brought his Scots National League together with other groups. The first incarnation was the Scottish National Movement, of which the President was Lewis Spence. The final and authorized version of the Scottish National Party appeared in 1928 with Spence as Vice-President, and as President R. B. Cunninghame Graham.[99] Even Cunninghame Graham was not exempt from the occult infection. In 1897 he had contributed a preface to a work called *The Canon* by an anonymous architect, usually said to be one William Stirling, in which the Cabala was made to be the basis of a rule of universal proportion. Cunninghame Graham approved Stirling's argument,[100] but it has been suggested that "Stirling"° was not really Stirling . . . With Spence we are on certain ground. A journalist and poet, he claimed to be clairaudient, *i.e.* to possess supernatural hearing. In the early morning he would hear "Faerie singing, wordless, and of wonderful harmony." One tremendous experience in the mountains assured him that "the great Souldrama of Scotland's fate" was supernaturally being played

° The town is near Cunninghame Graham's home.

out before him. Spence resurrected the ancient Mysteries of Britain, wrote copiously on Atlantis,[101] and belonged to an occult order with its headquarters abroad.[102] His poems are full of occult and Traditional Motifs; there is one, entitled *Haschish*, which seems to describe an astral journey like those supposedly performed by de Guaita under the influence of that drug.[103]

In Scotland, even more than in Ireland, the men of letters and the occult were influential in building up a spirit of nationalism. It is admitted that without the efforts of the literary men the united Scottish National Party could never have emerged.[104] Rejected causes and rejected knowledge came together to give a certain solidity to an ideal. There are many reasons why the early Scottish Nationalists did not achieve the success of their Irish counterparts. Perhaps one of the more telling is that Scotland's Nationalism was even more antiquarian than Ireland's. The irony is that Scotland has had much the more right to consider herself a continuing body politic. Perhaps the sheer wealth of material for the amateur historian and the espouser of lost causes has prevented her Nationalists from turning their mind to more practical problems.

The much-maligned Fiona Macleod put the case aptly in the essay, *Celtic*, which aroused so much storm among Nationalists. A.E. in particular objected to the opinion that there was no racial road to beauty. Such pronouncements make liberal sympathies side with Fiona, however much one may disapprove of her aesthetics. Through the Celtic Twilight she saw quite clearly:

> I think our people have most truly loved their land, and their country, and their songs, and their ancient traditions, and that the word of bitterest savour is that sad word exile. But it is also true that in love we love vaguely another land, a rainbow-land, and that our most desired country is not the real Ireland, the real Scotland, the real Brittany, but the vague Land of Youth, the shadowy Land of Heart's Desire. And it is also true, that deep in the songs we love above all other songs is a lamentation for what is gone away from the world, rather than merely from

> us as a people; or a sighing of longing for what the heart desires but no mortal destiny requites.[105]

The Cause above all Causes, the Nation, the People, the King, can provide a refuge from the deep Romantic despair. For the Saviors of Louis XVII it was a nostalgia for a Golden Age, for the apocalyptic socialists of 1848 the promise of the Millennium to come. The Nationalists combined both yearnings.

We shall discuss the further implications of this, and precisely why—apart from the mutual attraction of the rejected—the occult Traditions are so tenacious in the generation of such causes. For Socialisms of every shape and form had sprung up throughout Europe, Nationalisms were growing antlers—developments in Germany among the *völkisch* predecessors of Nazism are exactly similar to those we have observed in minuscule among the Celtic Revivalists. There was, for example, the influential occultist and nationalist publisher, Eugen Diederichs, who presided over meetings of his Sera circle wearing a turban and zebra-skin trousers. Diederichs' Circle was composed of both intellectuals and members of the Youth Movement. Its patron looked to elite spirits such as Meister Eckhart for a true interpretation of the essence of Germanity.[106]

If a certain atmosphere of unreality seems to pervade this Underground of eccentrics, individualists, and rejected men, it does not mean that they are not significant parts of Western history. By examining the Underground we obtain a better picture of the Establishment: the process is rather like an analyst studying a "deviant" to see whether he can discover the "norm." The results of such an analysis may well lead to the conclusion that there exists a standard of normal behavior, but that this is that of a limited personality. In the study of society the same sort of conclusion may well be possible.

1. J. Bersange, *Mme. du Bourg* (Paris/Lyon, 1890), pp. 273-6.

2. Neame, *Lourdes*, pp. 203-4, 122.
3. Maitland, *Anna Kingsford*, vol. I, p. 277.
4. In 1895 Marie Caithness edited and published at her press, *L'Aurore du jour nouveau*, a new edition of Naundorff's *Partie Préliminaire de la Doctrine céleste de notre Seigneur* . . . She was expert in Naundorfian theology, and once lectured Jules Bois on the subject. See Jules Bois, Preface to *Correspondence de Louis XVII (1834-38)*, ed. Otto Friederichs (Paris, 1904-1905), p. iii.
5. Thi is the opinion of G. Lenotre, *Martin le visionnaire* (Paris, 6th edition, 1924), pp. 140-41, on whom I have drawn heavily. This well-documented work is probably the only reliable account of the mystical aspects of Legitimacy.
6. Léon Creissels, *Louis XVII et les faux Dauphins* (Paris, 1936). Among so many partisan works, a summary of the pros and cons of each Pretender.
7. For Naundorff, see H. R. Madol, *The Shadow-King* (London, 1930).
8. Lévi, *History of Magic*, pp. 312-15.
9. Lévi, *History of Magic*, p. 315.
10. Lenôtre, *Martin*, pp. 1-55, 66, 82-3, 96-111.
11. Lenôtre, *Martin*, pp. 149-51, 200-45.
12. Grange, *Le Prophète de Tilly*, p. 29.
13. Lévi, *History of Magic*, p. 333.
14. Lévi, *History of Magic*, p. 333.
15. Madol, *Shadow-King*, p. 206.
16. Rhodes, *Satanic Mass*, p. 156.
17. Stanislas de Guaita, *Temple de Satan*, pp. 442-3.
18. Lenôtre, *Martin*, p. 263; Madol, *Shadow-King*, pp. 241-2. There is some dirty work at this crossroads that I have not been able to disentangle. The publication of Naundorff's work resulted in seven of his supporters dissociating themselves from the heretic Pretender. One of these was A. Gozzoli (Madol, *Shadow-King*). It was a Gozzoli, together with Alexandre Geoffroi (perhaps the son of Fernand), who first spread abroad the charges that Vintras used sexual rites (see A. E. Waite's note 1, p. 335 of his translation of Lévi, *History of Magic*). Probably the usual occultist-cat-occultist fight.
19. Lenôtre, *Martin*, pp. 142-3. Neame, *Lourdes*, p. 201.
20. Erdan, *La France mystique*, vol. II, p. 183.
21. Lévi, *History of Magic*, pp. 356-7.

22. Quoted Erdan, *La France mystique*, vol. II, p. 184.
23. Lévi, *History of Magic*, p. 356.
24. A. E. Waite, *Studies in Mysticism* (London, 1906), p. 108.
25. Desmettre, *Towianski*, p. 328.
26. Lenôtre, *Martin*, p. 180.
27. The apocalyptic prophecies of the Saviors of Louis XVII were matched by the mood of Mickiewicz and Towianski. Just before setting off for Italy in 1848 to form his ineffectual Polish Legion, Mickiewicz delcared to the *Oeuvre de Dieu* that their six years of spiritual work were now to bear fruit in military action: "J'avais à en répondre devant le tribunal de Dieu, si dans ce que je vous apporte j'etais guidé par des vues terrestres . . ." (Ladislas Mickiewicz, *Memorial de la Legion Polonaise de 1848, cree . . . par Adam Mickiewicz*, Paris, 1877, p. 27.)

Towianski was more specific in his response to the Polish rebellion of 1863: "Quelque chose d'extraordinaire a commencé sur la terre, les jours des comptes et du jugement de Dieu ont commence." (André Towianski, *Receuil des éclaircissements donnes a differantes personnes dans les premiers temps de l'insurrection polonaise*—tr. from Polish, Turin, 1914.)

28. Constant, letter to Erdan, printed in Erdan, *La France mystique*, vol. II, p. 187.
29. Lévi, *History of Magic*, pp. 355-6.
30. Van der Linden, *Esquiros*, p. 161.
31. Van der Linden, *Esquiros*, pp. 129-32.
32. Van der Linden, *Esquiros*, p. 31.
33. Letter printed Erdan, *La France mystique*, vol. II, p. 185.
34. Van der Linden, *Esquiros*, pp. 35-7; Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, pp. 46-61.
35. Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, pp. 71 ff. van der Linden, *Esquiros*, pp. 40-46.
36. Priscilla Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848* (New York, 1960), pp. 32-3.
37. Lévi, *History of Magic*, pp. 356-7.
38. Robertson, *Revolutions*, pp. 80-82.
39. Van der Linden, *Esquiros*, pp. 50-52, 53, 166, 189. Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, pp. 115 ff. Lévi to Erdan, printed Erdan, *La France mystique*, vol. II, pp. 187-8.

40. Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, pp. 119 ff.

41. Van der Linden, *Esquiros*, pp. 79-113. At his funeral were Pelletan, Louis Blanc, and Gambetta—"*tous franc-maçons notoires.*"

42. Van der Linden, *Esquiros*, p. 175.

43. In the letter already quoted, written 15 January 1855, Constant wrote to Erdan of Ganneau: "Figurez-vous une intelligence d'élite, un artiste surabondant, un poète trop riche pour achever un oeuvre, mais un génie toujours en effusion, une éloquence toujours originale et intarissable, de l'audace, du trait, des mots trouvés, et par dessus tout cela et à travers tout cela, un de ces coeurs sous les inspirations desquels on se fait crucifier avec joie même pour des ingrats." (In Erdan, *La France mystique*, vol. II, p. 1856.)

44. See for anaylsis H. J. Hunt, *Le socialisme et le romantisme en France* (a study of the Socialist Press, 1830-48) (Oxford, 1935).

45. Henri Delaage, *Affranchissement des classes désheritées* (Paris, 1848). Delaage knew Lamennais, and dedicated the work to Lacordaire.

46. Fabre des Essarts, Preface to S. Dismier, *Les destinées de l'homme d'aprés les lois de la nature, ou philosophie positive de '89* (Paris, 1889), pp. vii-viii. See also entry in *Dictionnaire des contemporains.*

47. Weintraub, *Adam Mickiewicz*, p. 169; cf. Marek, *Destinées.* The international anarchist underground felt affinities with the mystics. Bakunin made an ineffectual approach to Esquiros during his tenure of power at Marseilles. Twenty-six years earlier he had met Mickiewicz through a mutual friend who had been at Wilno with the Polish poet, and the anarchist and the Messianist subsequently used each other's ideas—perhaps chiefly for effect.

48. Chacornac, *Eliphas Lévi*, p. 100. The title was *The Wake of Poland.*

49. Friedrich Heer, *Intellectual History of Europe*, tr. Jonathan Steinberg (London, 1966), p. 1.

50. Brandreth, *Dr. Lee of Lambeth*, p. 184.

51. Catalogue: *Exhibition of the Royal House of Stuart at the New Gallery* (London), pp. 204-5.

52. Charles Petrie, *The Jacobite Movement* (3rd edition, London, 1959), pp. 470 ff. They claimed to have had a body of

support in the extreme sections of the Conservative element in Parliament during the passage of the 1832 Reform Bill.

53. Cognoscenti are referred to his *History of Yorkshire,* vol. I—*The Wapentake of Gilling West* (London, 1879).

54. C. S. Millard, writing from Keble College. Bound with the file of *The Jacobite* in Bodleian Library, Oxford, See also Millard's *Miscellaneous Papers of the Legitimist Jacobite League of Great Britain and Ireland,* collection in the same library.

55. See *British Home Rule, a cure for eccentricity, long thought hopeless* (London and Edinburgh, 1880). The pamphlet (anonymous) was occasioned by the Irish crisis. By 1886 there was a British Home Rule Association of which Ashburnham was the Chairman.

65. *Hansard,* 4th series, vol. VIII (57 Victoria, first vol., session 1893), p. 1376.

57. See *Pall Mall Gazette* for 1901: 10 October, pp. 1-2; 19 October, p. 4; 23 October, p. 11; also *The Legitimist Ensign* (organ of the Thames Valley Legitimist Club) for same year, no. 1.

58. *Legitimist Ensign* (1901, no. 3), p. xii.

59. Brandreth, *Dr. Lee of Lambeth,* pp. 183-5.

60. Anson, *Abbot Extraordinary,* pp. 28-30. One of the chief objects of the Order of the White Rose, according to the *Legitimist Kalandar* for 1894, was to "oppose all that tendeth to Democracy, whether within these realms or beyond the seas."

61. *Legitimist Ensign* (1901, no. 1), p. ii.

62. *The Jacobite Doctors* (Egham, 1896), p.16.

63. There are brief allusions to Mather's probable involvement in the Jacobite movement in Ellic Howe, *Magicians of the Golden Dawn.*

64. John Symonds, *The Great Beast* (paperback edition, 1963), p. 87, note 1.

65. Nothing is more telling than the total other-worldliness of A.E. (George Russell) in the face of such realities. See Nicholas Mansergh, *The Irish Question* (London, 1965), p. 262 and note 2. Yet A.E.'s essay on *The National Being* remains a classic statement of the nationalist position, and has recently even been translated into Welsh—presumably to boost the morale of the Welsh Nationalists.

66. R. M. Dorson, *The British Folklorists* (London, 1968), p. 1.

67. For A. M. Grant, see Dorson, *Folklorists*, p. 152.

68. Wales seems to have been more quiescent than the other "Celtic" areas: Welsh language and culture being then, as now, more individual and alive than the native traditions of Lowland Scotland and Ireland, no doubt Nationalism of the sort prevalent north of the Border and west of the Irish Sea was superfluous. It is perhaps significant, however, that Wales did not escape its share of other-worldly enthusiasm; there was an interesting religious revival movement about the turn of the century. See A. T. Fryer, "Psychological Aspects of the Welsh Revival," in *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, part LI, vol. XIX (December, 1905), pp. 80 ff.

69. Dorson, *Folklorists*, p. 392.

70. For comments on Scottish "occult" folklore, see Dorson, *Folklorists*, p. 417.

71. Dorson, *Folklorists*, pp. 212-16.

72. See Campbell and Hall, *Strange Things*, passim.

73. Fiona Macleod, "Celtic," in *The Winged Destiny* (London, 1904); the essay reprinted from *The Contemporary Review* of 1900.

74. For an account of the genesis of this mystical nationalism, see Ernest Boyd, *Ireland's Literary Renaissance* (Dublin, 1968, reprint of 1918 edition), pp. 213 ff.

75. King, *Ritual Magic*, pp. 49-54.

76. Virginia Moore, *The Unicorn* (New York, 1954), pp. 61-76.

77. If we are to be deprived of the insights which Miss Kathleen Raine's informed scholarship would have brought to the problem, we must for the moment remain content with such studies as exist: Moore, *Unicorn*, and Giorgio Melchiori, *The Whole Mystery of Art* (London, 1960), have some of the story. Yeats' *Autobiographies*, and in particular his fascinating *A Vision* (new edition, London, 1962), provide the more obvious clues to follow. See also, H. R. Bachnan's slightly muddled *W. B. Yeats and Occultism* (Delhi, 1965).

78. Nethercot, *First Five Lives*, p. 347.

79. John Eglinton, *A Memoir of A.E.* (London, 1937), pp. 33 ff.

80. See James M. Pryse, *The Apocalypse Unveiled* (New York, 1910), and *The Restored New Testament* (New York and London, 1914).

81. Pryse, *The Adorers of Dionysius* (New York and London, 1925), p. 151.

82. For a description of one of A.E.'s visions, see *The Candle of Vision*, pp. 341-5.

83. A. E. in *The Irish Theosophist*, vol. III, no. 6 (15 March 1895), p. 101.

84. A.E. in *The Irish Theosophist*, p. 103; cf. Eglinton, *A.E.*, pp. 36-8 for an account of A.E.-ism.

85. Margaret Digby, *Horace Plunkett* (Oxford, 1949), p. 103.

86. A.E., *National Being* (Dublin, 1916), p. 3.

87. A.E., *National Being*, p. 9.

88. See analysis of Duncan Glen, *Hugh Macdiarmid and the Scottish Renaissance* (London, 1964), pp. 42-7.

89. For Napier, see his *Fiery Cross* (Edinburgh, 1901-12); his obituary in the *New Zealand Jacobite*, vol. II, no. 9 (November 1924); the annual report of the *Legitimist Jacobite League, 1899-1900* in the Bodleian *Misc. Papers*, and the Jacobite (30 April 1903), p. 28.

90. E. A. Sharp, *William Sharp, A Memoir* (London, 1910), p. 386.

91. J. A. Goodchild, *The Light of the West*, Part One issued only (London, 1898), pp. 99-102.

92. From Goodchild, *The Brethren*, in *My Friends at Sant' Ampelio* (London, 1896), p. 336.

93. E. A. Sharp, *William Sharp*, p. 387. The fascinating dual personality of Sharp still remains to be discussed. There are indications that the "Fiona" part of him produced the romances in a semi-automatic fashion.

94. For Geddes, see Philip Mairet, *Pioneer of Sociology* (London, 1957); and better, Philip Boardman, *Patrick Geddes* (Univ. N. Carolina, 1944).

95. *The Evergreen* (Spring 1895), p. 149.

96. Ian Finlay, *Art in Scotland* (Oxford, 1948), p. 144.

97. C. R. Cammell, *Heart of Scotland* (London, 1956), pp. 229-31.

98. See his manifesto for "The Scottish Monarchists" (London, 1937). The magazine was *The Whirlwind, the organ of the Hon. Stuart Erskine and Mr. Herbert Vivian.*

99. Cammell, *Heart of Scotland*, pp. 30-31; cf. Glen, *Macdiarmid*, pp. 45-7.

100. *The Canon, An Exposition of the pagan Mystery in the Cabala as the rule of all the arts* (London, 1897). Cf. the opening lecture of George Felt to the Theosophical Society.

101. Lewis Spence, "The Fairy Faith" in *The Atlantis Quarterly* vol. I, no. 4, pp. 237 ff. Spence, *Atlantis Quarterly*, vol. II, no. 1, pp. 47-8. See Lewis Spence, *The Mysteries of Britain* (London, 1928), with illustrations by Wendy Wood, another prominent Scottish Nationalist.

It is surely no coincidence that another politician of rejected causes—Ignatius Donnelly (1831-1901), a proponent of bimetalism—was the man who in his *Atlantis* (1881) first gave a really popular form to the Atlantis legend. Later Donnelly discovered his notorious "Baconian cipher" in Shakespeare's plays, For Donnelly, see Martin Ridge, *Ignatius Donnelly* (Chicago, 1964), which is particularly interesting on his political activities.

102. Cammell, *Heart of Scotland*, p. 30; Spence, review of Raymond Andrea, *The Technique of the Master* in *The Atlantis Quarterly*, vol. I, no. 3, p. 194. Rumor has it that his was a Druid order. If this has substance, I suspect (from Spence's known German contacts) that this may have been the *Reichsgrossloge* of the *Druidenorden* (a form of Masonry).

103. Spence, *Le Roi d'Ys* (London, 1910), pp. 23-4.

104. Glen, *Macdiarmid*, p. 47.

105. E. A. Sharp, *William Sharp*, p. 322. Fiona Macleod, "Celtic," p. 184.

106. For Diederichs, see George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (London, 1966). For the "*Völkische*" movement, see passim; also the forthcoming work of Ellic Howe, *The Lunatic Fringe in Germany* (1890-1925), to be issued under the auspices of the Center for Research into Collective Psychopathology, University of Sussex. For my own assessment of the position of the "*Völkische*" in the Age of the Irrational, see the forthcoming *The Occult Establishment*.

Chapter 9
The Two Realities

IT is not enough to say that a common participation in the Underground of rejected knowledge accounts for the clustering of occult and mystical points of view around great popular movements of the 19th and 20th centuries. There is a fundamental kinship between Nationalisms, Socialisms, and the occult world-view. The great secular creeds of the 19th century arose as part of that century's attempted solution of the crisis of consciousness. Religion and nationalism, Erich Fromm has

written, together with any belief "however absurd and degrading" which performs the same function of connecting man with his fellow man, are refuges from isolation.[1] In the opinion of Friedrich Heer, "the secular philosophies and intellectual systems of our day are theologies of laymen."[2] The function which was fulfilled by the all-embracing Christ-directed society of the Middle Ages has been to some extent usurped by the secular religions of Country and People. These ideas can create a sense of common purpose and alleviate the horror felt by Rational man at his isolation even from his kindred. The growth of Nationalisms and Socialisms took place at the same time and in response to the same causes as the Occult Revival. Personal responsibility could be drowned in the primal sea of communal obligation.

But there is a far greater similarity between the premises on which the secular religions are based and those of Traditional thought. The cities of these creeds are not of this world. Let us take the Celtic Nationalists as examples. A.E. wrote:

> A nation exists primarily because of its own imagination of itself. It is a spirit created by the poets, historians, musicians, by the utterances of great men, the artists in life.[3]

The Scotsman, thought Lewis Spence,

> creates for himself in exile a Scotland of the mind, a spiritual fatherland, the microcosm of the Caledonian scene. He is a Faust, or, shall we say, a Thomas Rymour, a man of alchemies and druidisms, a man of magical ancestry . . .[4]

The idea of the Nation is brought into being, if not by imaginative means, by an attempt to see further than the perceptions of everyday. It requires a substantial superstructure of Rationalist theorizing to disguise its true nature: so historians and ethnologists are called in to give their opinions on *Vor-*, *Früh-* and *Ur-geschichte;* and a number of them will provide the necessary "scientific" basis for the nation-state. As a coherent doctrine, Nationalism has arisen in the last 150 years. We are re-

minded by historians that what may now appear an obviously "natural" form of government was a novel creation of political philosophers.[5] The roots of the concept of Nationality have been traced to the Jewish idea of the Chosen People, and to the Christian adoption of this position as the privileged of God.[6] We have seen how the Polish exiles took the idea over in an almost incredibly literal fashion; and how similar theories were in the air in France. France, Poland, Scotland, or Germany—they are all countries of the mind, or rather of the spirit.

The cause of the People has a potentially wider application. Loyalty to the ideal of world Socialism is a more ambitious attachment than devotion to the members of one specific Nationality. And the Socialist city is by that much further divorced from the rationalist/scientific/materialist view of the world. The Marxist claims that Communism is produced by the dialectical process working itself out in society—that it is the result of natural law operating in a manner which can be predicted from scientific observation. Yet the predictive failure of Marxist analysis merely reinforces the point that such a prediction is essentially prophetic—it is a prophecy of the coming Millennium justified, like Nationalist doctrines have been justified, with a topdressing of "scientific method." Of the more Utopian varieties of socialism it is scarcely necessary to argue that they are kingdoms not of this world. As Martin Buber observed, the greatest power working on the side of the Utopians is "resistance to mass or collective loneliness."[7] A dream of the ideal egalitarian society is perhaps the most sustaining substitute for the belief that the ideal society is that in which one lives.

Such idealistic theories of politics are by their very nature in constant danger of being turned into religions. I would argue that they in fact *are* religions, although it is comparatively rare for traditional religious observances to be employed. But, for example, in the Positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte, a religion was invented that bore recognizable relation to displaced Christianity. Comte did not admit the future existence of the soul. The portion of

humanity which was worth remembering he incorporated in a Great Being, and elevated those for whom the individual had felt great attachment to the status of his guardian angels. Thus Comte's guardian angels were his mother, a Mme. De Vaux, and his servant, Sophie Bliot. At the grave of Madame de Vaux, Comte would pray regularly.[8] In his program for the reform of society the philosopher devised nine social sacraments, and he proposed to set up in the Temples of the Great Being a statue of Divine Humanity. The irrepressible Alexandre Erdan mused: "I involuntarily imagine M. Comte on his knees before his domestic altar, worshipping Sophie Bliot, whilst the latter is busy sweeping out the Temple-flat in which the High Priest of Positivism lives."[9]

The two schools of thought which exercised the greatest influence on the Utopian aspirations of the 19th century were those of Saint-Simon and Fourier. From Saint-Simon's visionary amalgam of socialist principles and a reconstituted Christianity, his disciples created a religion. Saint-Simon had concluded that the true practice of socialism implied a semi-mystical apprehension of the unity of all existence, which would itself automatically mean that each man would devote himself to the common cause. His disciples turned themselves into a religious community. At Ménilmontant, under the direction of "Father" Enfantin, the faithful led a dedicated life, sharing the menial tasks and eventually adopting a uniform or monastic habit of archaic design in red, white, and blue. Exaltation gave birth to the doctrine of the coming Woman-Messiah, of whom Enfantin felt himself to be the precursor. (Traces of this tradition of thought can be found in some of the more extravagant cults of the Virgin Mary and, surprisingly, in the esoteric Christianity of Anna Kingsford.) The brief vogue of Saint-Simonianism could not survive both cloistering and extravagance. When Enfantin died in 1864, his teachings remained more a memory than a lasting influence.[10] But among the circles of mystical socialists of which Esquiros, Constant, and Ganneau were part, Saint-Simonianism was a

pervasive force during the time of its flourishing. The occult and mystical socialism proved easy bedfellows.

There was Alexander Weill, who had been deeply involved in "Young Germany," the Saint-Simon-inspired movement to the east of the Rhine, before Gérard de Nerval brought him to Paris to become the Prophet of the Faubourg St-Honoré.[11] There were former Saint-Simonians like Jean Reynaud and Ange Geúpin, who adopted a form of "Druidism."[12] Among the Poles, Saint-Simon had made converts even before the unsuccessful rebellion.[13] But perhaps the most surprising convert was Hoëne-Wronski. According to his theory of successive historical ages, the 19th century witnessed the fifth; and of this age the presiding and unstoppable spirit was socialism.[14] It was in 1829, the year of the publication of his *Fundamental Problem of Modern Politics*, that Wronski felt compelled to join the Saint-Simonians. There exists a German translation of a letter written by him setting out his views on their doctrines. As far as he understood them (he wrote) he believed completely in the philosophical and practical principles of the school. He also believed that he had penetrated the hidden doctrine underlying their openly-proclaimed beliefs. From the point of view of the Absolute, Saint-Simonianism appeared to be a fundamental link in the future evolution of mankind. But Wronski's socialist principles seem to have become somewhat less compelling when he discovered that he was unlikely to be able to acquire among the Saint-Simonians a body of support for his own work; and he plunged back into his researches.[15]

A rival inspirer of Utopian colonies, and a competitor for the favors of occultists, was Charles Fourier, whose "law of association" even penetrated the backwoods of Poughkeepsie and inspired the "Harmonial Philosophy" of Andrew Jackson Davis. Fourier's system was based on a belief in the law of Attraction or Association—a series of correspondences in nature which hold the universe in harmony. This has obvious similarities with occult theories of sympathy and correspondence. Fourier considered that the

whole world was a gigantic animal, its every part in relation to the next in the same way that the parts of a human body complement and act one on another. He went further. Stars were also alive; they were born, grew, and procreated. The Earth itself would last 24,000 years; and civilization would be transformed when the male electricity of the North Pole arched over to join the female electricity of the South Pole and formed a permanent Aurora Borealis. This metaphysical coupling would enable humanity, at last, to resume the course from which it had so long been diverted as a result of an appalling accident, far back in time, when the Earth had lost four of its moons and the fifth, the dead planet at present in the sky, had caused the Flood in its death-agonies.[16]

In addition to this fantastic cosmology, Fourier applied his law of Association to human society. Mankind was itself united by these cosmic bonds and must organize a society more in accordance with its true nature. He projected the establishment of small communities called "phalansteries," with a maximum of 1,800 members, in which the conflicting passions and temperaments of mankind could be harmonized into a self-sufficient whole. Several colonies were actually started on this plan: for example, the Brook Farm Institute, founded in 1841 by George Ripley of the New England Transcendentalists. Ripley introduced Fourier's principles in 1844 to the complete financial ruin of his colony; and, three years later, the enterprise was forcibly dissolved by the burning of the $10,000 phalanstery.[17] Among the occultists of Paris, Esquiros and Constant in particular were influenced by Fourier. Constant published three books under the auspices of the Fourierists, the second of which attributed the theory of correspondences to Rabelais.[18]

Thus the teachings of those who would establish Heaven on Earth were as much part of the mystical Underground as the occultists' Traditions or the more conventional socialisms dating from the 1790s. Charles Fauvety, the Saint-Simonian, kept open house to all schools of thought.

There Louis Ménard would meet the Fourierist Pierre Leroux, Alexander Weill, the ex-Abbé Constant, and the palmist Desbarolles. Victor Hugo, exiled to Jersey after the *coup d'état* of 1851, could write to Father Enfantin that he felt himself in a profound brotherhood with him as one of the seers of universal life.[19] The Spiritualist experiments carried out by Hugo's Jersey circle were shared by the former disciple of Fourier, Victor Henequin. Henequin began to revise his master's theories. Unfortunately, the final arbiters of these corrections were the spirits, who soon tired of communicating with the philosopher by means of table-rapping and informed him that he possessed a sensing organ on his head through which they could speak. The communications outdid the wildest fantasies of Fourier. After death (Henequin's system proclaimed) the noblest spirits became women—even if male in life. Thus Fourier (by this time dead) and, more strikingly, the Emperor Napoleon, were reposing in female bodies in the seventh degree of his Heaven.[20] Henequin became quite mad and would be seen wandering around Paris writing in the air sentences which he claimed were perfectly visible.

Yet simple coincidence does not explain the incessant attraction of Romantic Socialism and the occult. One can say that there is a "common mystical approach"; but this scarcely advances the enquiry. Constantly, however, we find socialists and occultists running in harness. The Gnostic Fabre des Essarts included Enfantin and Fourier in his galley of heroes, along with Lamennais and Louis Blanc.[21] The Polish exiles formed several Utopian or Communistic colonies, like Mickiewicz's United Brethren, and the Grudziaz Brotherhood of common soldiers.[22] (The United Brethren were founded in 1834 with the aim of encouraging a new moral life among the émigrés.)[23] Neither was Brook Farm the only Utopian colony to derive from the Transcendentalists. In 1843 Bronson Alcott had established a small community known as Fruitlands, near Harvard, in an attempt to liberate the primitive instincts of man. This group was vegetarian and teetotal: and so strict in the

application of its basic principles that only the "aspiring" vegetables—those which grew upwards—were permitted. With the condemnation of the baser roots and the banning of milk and eggs, it is small wonder that the experiment failed in the first winter.[24] In Paris the Cabalist Coëssin organized his "spiritual families" immediately after the Revolution of 1830. The families took a vow of poverty and obedience and produced items for their own use or for sale, like Coëssin's invention of a "pneumatic watering-can."[25] Increasingly it becomes apparent that extreme forms of socialism, and in particular attempts actually to realize some such aspirations on this earth, are an integral part of the Occult Revival—and, more broadly, of that questing for the direction society was to take occasioned by the crisis of consciousness.

The important factor is that the 19th-century Utopians were not content to theorize. They intended to *do* something about society. If they were baulked of changes on a grandiose scale, they would institute minor changes, organizing a self-contained society where the good life could be lived and from which, hopefully, it would spread. Thus when Etienne Cabet was exiled from France in 1834, his labors in London took the form of compiling his own Utopia, "Icaria," which he first attempted to establish in Texas on the eve of the 1848 Revolution. With the failure of his Texas venture, Cabet moved his colonists to the abandoned Mormon village of Nauvoo near St. Louis, where the enterprise ran for some years before expiring.[26] Needless to say, the Abbé Constant had friends among the Icarians.[27] Mention of Nauvoo prompts the reflection that many of the developments already outlined in other contexts possessed a strongly Utopian character. The Mormon colony at Nauvoo was a society organized on the certainties proclaimed by Joseph Smith, and gave birth to an astonishingly successful Utopia in Salt Lake City. The Theosophical Headquarters at Adyar was itself something of a Utopian colony, where the inmates waited upon the Masters or received occult instruction. It is interesting that according to Theosophical

sources, H. P. Blavatsky made an attempt to see the Mormons at Nauvoo in 1851. But by the time she reached the colony, the sect had moved off toward Utah.[28] As for the American Theosophists, under the direction of Katherine Tingley, the Point Loma Colony in California became a Theosophical Utopia run on semi-military lines.[29] It might even be said that the revival of interest in Anglican monastic orders was a reflection of the same tendency to establish closed communities in which an ideal existence might be led. It is impossible to deny that in Utopian colonies there is often an escapist element. The establishment of the ideal society entails the shutting out of the life which has been judged and found wanting.

Most significant of all, because most nebulous in theory, were the Spiritualist colonies, like "Mountain Cove," founded in 1850 on the advice of the spirits and directed by James D. Scott, a Baptist minister, and Thomas Lake Harris. Scott and Harris were the channels through which celestial directions were transmitted to the colony which, in terms of economic organization, was communist. Similar settlements were the Kiantone Movement, founded in 1853 by a Universalist minister who had become a medium, and based on free love, communism, and spirit communication; and the vegetarian free-love group known as the "Harmonial Society" instituted by an ex-Methodist preacher in 1855.[30] The obvious expectation amongst the perpetrators of such colonies—that all things were to be made new—is revealing in the context of the times. It is not even possible to separate the "mainstream" Utopian colonies inspired by Cabet's Icaria from the more mystical groups deriving from Spiritualism or other occult theologies. We are brought back again to the puzzling question—why does there exist this alliance between occultists and those who would inaugurate the ideal society?

The key lies in the word "ideal." If there is a single characteristic underlying all the expressions of Traditional thought—I am not talking about fantastic accretions—it is that they are world-rejecting. The goal is ecstasy, liberation

from matter, or a progressive enlightenment which will enable the adept to realize his innate divinity. It is possible to go further. In this rejection of the world, there is a positive side. This can be represented as the passage of the spirit toward the Good. The Traditional world-view entails the belief that it is possible to unite the individual spirit with the Transcendent Good; alternatively, to realize the Good immanent in each member of humanity. It is this Good—Good as matter, the world or the flesh is Evil—which the Traditionalist will call the Divine. In artistic terms this is translated into a pursuit of the Beautiful for its own sake. As Dean Inge writes:

> The phase of thought or feeling which we call Mysticism has its origin in that which is the raw material of all religion, and perhaps of all philosophy and art as well, namely, that dim consciousness of *the beyond*, which is part of our nature as human beings.[31]

If to the consciousness of the beyond, the visionary adds a desire to achieve union with this supermundane Good, he is called a mystic. The mystic, far from being impractical, is the most practical of men. He has seen what seems to him to be the supreme goal, and has arranged his priorities in accordance with this conviction. This will possibly result in his becoming ineffective in everyday life, but not necessarily so. The core of the occult Traditions is a selection of practical techniques, all of which purport to assist this passage of the soul toward the Good.

Father Joseph Marechal distinguishes three types of mysticism. There is what he calls a "negative mysticism"; this is the simple goal of self-liberation from matter. There is a "positive pantheistic mysticism" which might be represented as a mysticism of this world, a sense of divinity potential in man. There is, finally, a "positive theistic mysticism," which is intended to signify the Christian quest for God.[32]

The Socialisms of the world—whose kingdom is of another world entirely—partake of the second sort of mysticism, the pantheistic. By however much the Socialist

steps away from specific cases of what he considers social injustice, he becomes by that much more idealistic in his attitude. If he attempts to realize on earth his absent ideal of the Good Society, his efforts on a social plane are similar to those of the individual mystic in his personal quest for liberation or for God. The personal quest has as its goal the union with Good, the realization of the Divine. The Socialist quest has as its goal the identification of human society with a supposed ideal society, the realization of Utopia. It was against this form of socialism that Marx and Engels reacted with their weapon of the dialectic—because natural social causes would anyway produce the ideal society, there was no need for the more visionary or mystical brands of socialist thought. A comparison is possible between this supposedly "scientific" form of socialism and the attempts of 19th-century occultists to make respectable their "occult science."

We can go even further. The opposition has been made between the schools of thought devoted respectively to Plato and Aristotle. At the collapse of medieval society, Aristotle, the philosopher of observation and the scientific method, vanquished Plato, the Metaphysician, logician of the *beyond*, and father of much of occult Tradition.

Rationalism and the scientific method built up societies and nations *ad hoc*, in accordance with practical considerations such as power and profit and loss. The Underground of occult thought has never been concerned with profit and loss—though there were and are countless charlatans to whom this is the primary object—and very much concerned with the Ideal. Plato's famous theory of the Ideas is the source of all such speculations: the Idea being a sort of abstraction of things or qualities in this present life but possessing of itself a real existence in a supermundane world. The supreme Idea is that of the Good; and it is toward this Ideal Good that the efforts of the mystics are directed.

But Platonic philosophy has not only been concerned with such abstracted principles of metaphysics. Because Plato was concerned about the Good, he was also concerned

about the Good Society. Because he was concerned about the Ideal, he was concerned about the Ideal State. Thus he constructed a number of ideal commonwealths, most famously the rather appalling closed society of the *Republic*. The significant difference between Plato's Ideal State and the Republics erected on practical principles by those who engineer revolutions is that the Ideal State exists in a philosophical limbo. The principles which *ought* to govern society are taken as the basis for its institutions rather than those whose have been proven effective. The Ideal State inhabits the same supermundane world as the Ideal Good; and those in search of either exalted Idea share not only a method of approach, but a historical tradition.

Utopians have been associated with the Platonic Tradition and therefore with occultists throughout the history of Europe. For example, the renegade Dominican, Tommaso Campanella, who is believed to have practiced magic with Pope Urban VIII, was imprisoned in 1599 because of an ill-advised attempt to establish his ideal City of the Sun, a Christian Republic as prophesied to Saints Catherine and Bridget. Campanella's early examination of Pythagoras, Empedocles, and other Traditional writers, was reinforced by his association in Naples with one Giovanni Battista della Porta, who was working out a systematic basis for magic. His sense of mission drew strength from his conviction that the sun was approaching the earth. There were portents: comets, floods, earthquakes. In the middle of the confusion caused by the earth tremors, Campanella appeared in Reggio and Messina, a strange and prophetic figure, his hair brushed into seven points. His City of the Sun was never established. His motley following of bandits and rogue priests failed to secure the Turkish support on which they had relied, and Campanella's ideals were confined with their exponent to the papal prisons.[33] It is possible that this remarkable prophet nearly succeeded in gaining the support of the Pope himself.[34]

Thus, during the disturbance of Renaissance and Reformation, Utopia emerged with the Traditions to which it was

united by a common intellectual ancestry, a common approach to life, and a common opposition to the Powers Which Were. In the 19th century historical accident contrived that men drew upon Traditional thought at the same time as they constructed their secular religions.

Time was to prove that the political divisions of modern commentators into Left- and Right-wing make little difference in the world of Ideal States. The government of such a Utopia may be of a Left-wing or a Right-wing complexion; the one characteristic which marks it off from pragmatically established states is its *preconception*. The principles of government are known. They are not to be established by experiment. It is the Platonic, rather than the Aristotelian approach. Such states, nations, or colonies, because of the nature of the thought which has engendered them, are liable to be what is nowadays called totalitarian, but might—given the idea of a secular religion—just as well be called theocratic. The occultist might feel called, like Thomas Lake Harris, to establish Utopia on occult principles; which occult principles will then determine how the colony is to be conducted. The socialist or the nationalist establishes his Ideal State—for every revolutionary aims to establish at least some portion of Utopia—on the basis of another principle: the unity of the *Volk*, or the equality of mankind. The secular form of the faith does not mean that its application is any less theocratic than the application of Christian standards during the Middle Ages. There is in any society an accepted wisdom, and the struggle for Utopia represents the struggle to impose one's own interpretation of the universe on society—to become Established in one's own right.

But even dissent can be institutionalized. The 19th century saw the growth of that body of recognized intellectual opposition to the Establishment which has since become so prominent a feature of Western society. It is perhaps confusing, after emphasizing so much the dichotomy between Establishment and Underground, to call this group an Underground Establishment—but this is precisely what it is. It is characterized by idealism above everything.

Although it may pretend to scientific rationalism, and indeed may have arrived at some of its conclusions in a rationalist manner, in its application of its findings it is similarly idealistic. We have seen how the Bohemians of Paris adopted occultism into their "Artistic" synthesis of Opposition. In a similar fashion the European, but particularly the Anglo-Saxon Underground Establishment—let us call it the Progressive Underground Establishment—shared a collection of convictions all of which were rejected by the Establishment of Rationalism and right order, and all of which had some flavor of the idealistic. Such beliefs naturally allied themselves with rejected political aspirations, in the same way that politics, Art, and occultism had joined forces in Bohemia. By the 1890s, which decade marks one of the most obvious high-water marks of the flight from reason, this complex of beliefs might include Vegetarianism, Anti-Vivisection, Women's Rights, Kindness to Animals, and a plethora of other causes of a Socialist or Nationalist nature like those we have already observed in connection with the Underground of occult Tradition. Indeed, if one is hunting occultists, it is no bad way to begin by analyzing, say, vegetarians. Some at least will prove to subscribe to one or another form of the Traditions.

In his history of Spiritualism Frank Podmore observed:

> Spiritualism indeed, necessarily attracted within its sphere the "cranks," the social theorists and reformers, the rebels against convention and the exiles from society.[33]

This was an exceptionally clear-headed comment from someone who was himself in the thick of the developments he describes. Podmore was not only a member of the Society for Psychical Research, but is said to have been a Theosophist; and more certainly was instrumental in the founding of the Fabian Society. The Fabian Society itself was a center of the Progressive Underground; and the manner of its founding is intriguing.

The catalyst was Thomas Davidson (1840-1907), a Utopian in the Platonic Tradition. Spiritually, writes the historian of the Society, Davidson was descended from the Utopians of Brook Farm and the phalansteries. His ideal was of a community of superior people living withdrawn from the world to lead the higher life.[36] William James, who was a friend of Davidson, called him a "Platonizer" and tried to inveigle him into the faculty of Greek at Harvard. Davidson ruined the plan by offending the department at the critical juncture: his temperament was individualist in the extreme. James reported him as remarking, "If you believe in a protective tariff, you're in hell already, although you may not know it." Davidson's Utopian principles were partially realized in his founding in 1889 of the Glenmore "Summer School of the Culture Sciences" in the Adirondacks;[37] with his progeny in the Fabian Society he was not pleased at all.

In 1883, Davidson was in England, holding meetings of an inspirational cast in Chelsea, to which came earnest seekers for the cure to society's ills whose previous socialist education had consisted—besides regular doses of Henry George (the agrarian reformer) and John Stuart Mill—in the absorption of Comte and the theories of Christian Socialism. Frank Podmore attended in the company of Edward Pease. The two had met through a common interest first in Spiritualism, then in Psychical Research. It was while they were vainly watching for a ghost in a haunted house in Notting Hill that they discovered a further point of contact in the discussion of Henry George. After Thomas Davidson's departure for America, those who had attended his meetings continued with meetings of their own, to which came, for example, Hubert Bland, and a granddaughter of the Socialist, Robert Owen, who was afterwards to marry Laurence Oliphant. By December 1883, matters had come to a vote, and when a proposal was made to establish a "Fellowship of the New Life" based on principles similar to those of Davidson, Frank Podmore was

responsible for moving counter-measures which ended in the establishment of the Fabian Society proper; the more extreme Utopians continued in their Fellowship.

The origins of the Fabian Society and the direction taken by its sibling, the Fellowship of the New Life, are extremely suggestive. The latter retained a more religious nature, founding an Ethical Church. Attempts were made to organize associated colonies, and one working cooperative was established under the direction of Edith Lees (the future Mrs. Havelock Ellis) at 49 Doughty Street, Bloomsbury.[38] Its Directress has left in a novel an interesting account of the running of this colony. The members are chosen from a predictable group of people. There is a poet, a Theosophical Major who is considered a "developed soul," a translator, a botanist, and a "Prince Ontoff"—apparently a portrait of the anarchist Kropotkin—who has fled Russia after a political murder. When two cynics arrive to sneer, they find that the woman journalist whom they have come to see is out buying vegetarian dinners. The house is furnished in a spartan fashion and a copy of T. H. Green's *Prologemena to Ethics* lies open on a table. The pictures decorating the house include a portrait of Queen Victoria, one of H.P.B., a Botticelli, a Tintoretto, heads of Whitman and Goethe, and Ellen Terry as Portia. This eclectic assembly of the Progressive Underground eventually dispersed—mostly to get married. The Fellowship of the New Life boasted Ramsay Macdonald as Honorary Secretary for 1892-3; and in 1896, two years before its dissolution, had a membership of over one hundred. As for the more famous Fabian Society, its disavowal of Davidson's Utopia by no means removed it from the sphere of idealism, or even of the occult. The magical order of the Stella Matutina included several Fabians among its membership, including Herbert Burrows, and the wife of Hubert Bland, better known as E. Nesbit. There was also the Spiritualist Survival League, founded by Catherine Dawson Scott, a founder-member of PEN, in which she was assisted by H. G. Wells and other Fabians.[39]

Of the members of the Fabian Society or the New Life who occupied themselves with other "progressive causes," Edward Carpenter and Henry Salt merit a short examination. Carpenter was a mystical homosexual who was inspired to write his *Towards Democracy* by reading the *Bhagavad Gita.* At one time he went daily for six weeks to sit at the feet of an Indian guru. At Fabian Society meetings he met Eileen Garrett, famous as a spirit medium till her death in the autumn of 1970, and encouraged her to read Indian scriptures and the poetry of Emerson. He also recommended books on the psychology of sex, about which he embraced unusual theories. His own homosexuality he turned into a spiritual virtue, believing that homosexuals and bisexuals were the next step on the evolutionary ladder. With these views he won over the wife of his fellow Fabian, Henry Salt, whose affections turned in the direction of cats and dogs. In 1891, Salt founded the Humanitarian League to "proclaim a *general* principle of humaneness" and for the rest of his life devoted himself to protecting the interests of animals and to the furtherance of vegetarian propaganda, in which Carpenter and Bernard Shaw joined him. In this circle, as the biographer of William Morris has noted, there was little Karl Marx but a great deal of Walt Whitman and Thoreau.[40]

There sprang up a host of similar vegetarian and humanitarian organizations, of which the most bizarre were probably the Wiltshire Society for United Prayer for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the Order of the Golden Age which included on its council two clergymen and a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and stoutly maintained before the world:

> That the *practice of eating flesh* has been pronounced by our highest scientific Authorities to be an *unnatural* habit, as man was undoubtedly created a Frugivorous or fruit-eating animal; and therefore it is a violation of God's Physical laws, and *totally unnecessary.*[41]

Anna Kingsford should be placed among the Progressive Underground. Her friend, Edward Maitland, showed great

interest in Salt's Humanitarian League,[42] and Anna herself played a leading part in spreading anti-vivisectionist propaganda abroad. In Paris, where she went with Maitland to learn the medicine which was to enable her to fight the vivisectors, she established a Society to abolish that evil under the patronage of Lady Caithness and with Victor Hugo as Honorary President.[43] Her London Hermetic Society was frequested by Edward Carpenter, who professed an admiration for Anna Kingsford while ridiculing her prophetic claims. Yet despite that ridicule he did not exclude the possibility that she had some sort of access to "some region of astral intelligence." Anna Kingsford herself was sufficiently convinced of the justice of her cause to commit murder for its sake. By a simple curse she was convinced that she had killed Professor Claude Bernard, who was conducting experiments on the heat tolerance of animals which included baking them to death. This was not enough. In the summer of 1886 she agreed to a proposal to study what Maitland refers to as "occultism," but is obviously practical magic. Her tutor was "a notable expert, well-versed in Hermetic and Kabalistic science." This was almost certainly MacGregor Mathers of the Golden Dawn. Anna Kingsford proposed to use the power to kill more vivisectors.[44]

Her first attempt was directed against Louis Pasteur. It exhausted her, but she was soon restored to spirits by hearing that Pasteur had been struck by a dangerous illness, and that the mortality rate among his patients had greatly increased. Whilst visiting H.P.B. at Ostend, she took chloroform, and was enabled to see that her "projections" were not only successful, but perfectly justified. H.P.B. and other Theosophists remonstrated with her, but to no avail. Anna Kingsford tried again, choosing as her target a Professor Paul Bert. Paul Bert died. The following diary entry is frighteningly indicative of its writer's state of mind:

> Yesterday, November 11th at eleven at night, I knew that my will had smitten another vivisector! Ah, but this man has cost me more toil than his master, the fiend Claude Bernard . . . The will can and *does* kill, but not always with the

> same rapidity . . . I have killed Paul Bert, as I killed Claude Bernard; as I will kill Louis Pasteur and after him the whole tribe of vivisectors, if I live long enough. Courage: it is a magnificent power to have, and one that transcends all vulgar methods of dealing out justice to tyrants.[45]

It was by Anna Kingsford that Annie Besant was converted to Anti-Vivisection.[46] The milieu of the Progressive Underground was Annie Besant's home territory. Her propaganda for socialism and birth control, her membership of the Fabian society, her association with Charles Bradlaugh, all place her directly within the group. That she could be so easily won over by H.P.B. says much not only about Mrs. Besant but about the circles in which she moved. Ostensibly, of course, the Theosophical Society was concerned with furthering International Brotherhood as well as research into comparative religion or the powers latent in man. The Mahatmas were unfortunate additions to the social pantheon. The Theosophical Society continued to interest itself in social matters. In America, Katherine Tingley, who succeeded William Q. Judge as the leader of the Theosophists in the United States, changed the name of the organization to the "International Brotherhood" and placed emphasis on social work.[47] In India Annie Besant was active in the cause of Indian Nationalism and became President in 1917 of the National Congress. The Irish Theosophists admitted that:

> It may not be our function to meddle in politics, but they interest us, as an indication on the surface of the forces at work behind the veil.
>
> Here in Ireland, politics are at top and bottom of everything, nothing else counts . . .

In the same breath the writer (probably A.E.) suggests the establishment of some common meeting ground in Dublin where "all interested in progressive work" might come.[48] In one aspect the Society in all its branches was an institutionalized embodiment of the Progressive Underground, with ideals of brotherhood, Utopian colonies, and occult principles fused together in one unwieldy whole.

Theosophists were free to give their time to other causes. They could move around the Underground at will. Such a one was David Graham Pole. A reader of Edward Carpenter, this Edinburgh lawyer was an enthusiastic Freemason and the lawyer who argued Anne Besant's case in the Krishnamurti appeal to the Privy Council. His Theosophical activities—he edited *Theosophy in Scotland*—led to his acquaintance with George Lansbury. Eventually he managed to buy the company which published Lansbury's *Weekly Herald* and to launch the *Herald* as a daily. Pole was also a member of the Fabian Society; his political meetings must have presented a strange conspectus of opinion. On the one hand he was supported by Bernard Shaw; on the other by Emily Lutyens. He was a Labour Member of Parliament for three years and he concluded his active life as chairman of a rent tribunal.[49] This career fairly represents the possibilities open to the more sober Progressives. Some of the eccentrics we have already seen.

The Underground transcended frontiers and extraordinary instances of cross-fertilization took place in the world of ideas. The young Gandhi adopted vegetarianism while in England. His conversion took place after reading Henry Salt's *A Plea for Vegetarianism*, and his very first writings appeared in the weekly magazine of the London Vegetarian Society. In 1907, while in the thick of his passive resistance campaign, he was sent Thoreau's *Essay on Civil Disobedience* and remained throughout his life devoted to its Transcendental author. More recently, the French mystic, Lanza del Vasto, reimported the doctrine of non-violence from India to Europe.[50]

But the section of the Underground which in the 19th century took least account of frontiers—although most often forced to cross them unwillingly—was the Anarchist element. In London Prince Kropotkin—who might equally well be found in Switzerland or France or anywhere that, for the moment, was safe—mixed with the circle of William Morris. In Edinburgh he naturally gravitated to the house of Patrick Geddes with whom he maintained a close

relationship. His compatriot and fellow anarchist, "Stepniak" (Kravchinsky) frequented the Fabians. Patrick Geddes himself, whose attempts at social reform have been compared to similar populist movements among Russian intellectuals, offered hospitality at his Summer Schools to Kropotkin, as well as the brothers Elié and Elisée Reclus, the first of whom had narrowly escaped the death-sentence for his revolutionary activities, and the second transportation to Devil's Island. Elisée Recluse—a vegetarian—proclaimed the advent of the *Cite du Bon Accord*.Geddes hoped that his Summer Schools might signal the beginnings of an International Fraternity—shades of Bonney at the Parliament of Religions—and plainly announced his intention to provide a foil to the "German University System" where the concentration was on minutiae. There was room, he thought, for a system which aimed at Synthesis.[51]

If not Plato versus Aristotle, it was the cry of the whole man demanding a coherent statement of his position in the universe from the scientists engaged in dissecting his body. Throughout the length and breadth of the Progressive Underground was the shared conviction that something was deeply wrong—that the world had run away with its master. For the anarchists the villain was Capital; for the occultists Materialism; for Geddes a misapplication of the Scientific Method. The conviction that something was wrong embodied the assumption that there was a way of putting it right.

The perception of error did not, however, guarantee success. Edward Carpenter saw the early 1880s as a period filled with portents. The many organizations he saw founded—Hyndman's Democratic Federation, the Theosophical Society, the Vegetarian Society, the Society for Psychical Research, the Anti-Vivisection movement—he characterized as "tending toward the establishment of mystical ideas and a new social order." This, as we have seen, was true for France and America as well. But the recognition of the crisis of consciousness was small use without a popular creed. The brave and foolish ventures, the backgarden Utopias of the Progressives, had little

future as useful frames of reference for a wide section of society. The victorious creeds were those of the Nationalists and the Socialists—constructs which did not permit too broad a view. Rationalism compromised with the Ideal and something of the Ideal came down to earth. Carpenter quoted the prophecy of Mother Shipton:

> And the world to an end shall come
> In eighteen hundred and eighty-one.[32]

It was at least most strangely altered. The sixty or so years preceding 1880 saw a progressive development of the crisis of consciousness, and the thirty years after that date witnessed an outburst of the most extravagant irrationalism. Nonetheless, the tried and tested Rationalist Establishment remained securely in control, tempering with its Aristotelian practicality the excesses of unreason. It was after the First World War, announced by the Establishment on one side as the "war to end war"—a practical means of abolishing a practical evil—that the credibility of the pragmatic method was seen to be severely damaged, and the Irrational began for the first time with great success to penetrate the sanctuaries of Rationalism, the academies, and the governments of nations. But the great success of both secular and mystical religions in the period between the two World Wars was attained only because the conflict had begun much earlier. In order to see in what direction the flight from Reason led, we must examine a question of perception.

Among practical people there is a certain amount of agreement on what constitutes the "real." "Real" objects are those which possess some physical characteristics by which they can be identified—they can be felt, seen, heard, tasted, or smelled. The category of the real can then be extended to emotions, thoughts, and practical concerns which are registered on the consciousness—they are remembered, or perceived, and are therefore "real." This is the Aristotelian approach: observation and conclusion.

On the other hand, for some people—the abstractions of Nation and People are real enough to fight for. What is one

to say of the "reality" of such concerns? To the materialist, or to the scientific observer, such realities do not make sense; and thus we discover a succession of historians maintaining that Nationalisms represent the conglomeration of various economic interests, and that material causes are alone sufficient to produce material effects. There is no need to argue divine intervention in history to maintain that the immaterial and immeasurable causes, particularly of mass movements, are at least as important as material stimuli. The imbalance in the attitude of the dedicated materialist results from his rejection of the irrational element in humanity. However much man might like to consider himself rational, history proliferates with examples that this is not the case. There is a forceful irrational side to his nature which keeps breaking through. Devotion to an intangible cause, be it a religious or a political ideal, is evidence of this trait.

The Establishment culture of the late 18th and 19th centuries was organized on the principles of the practical man. These defined "reality" as material goods and possibly as a simplistic form of "treasure in heaven." But there was no thought of bringing that treasure down to earth. We have seen that the Progressive Underground of the late 19th century was sufficiently devoted to its ideals to attempt to realize them at least in part. This was a notion of reality completely different from that of the Establishment, and in which great stress was placed on intangibles and abstractions. It was accordingly very difficult for the materialist to comprehend, except in terms of crude seeking for material betterment or for political gain. By the turn of the century there were present, and in competition with one another, two differing versions of reality which have since become confused, although in essence they remain diametrically opposed: the material and the "spiritual."

In conventional Christian thought, the spiritual remains isolated from the material. God withdraws from the world. We have noted how, when the possibility of miraculous interference with natural laws is admitted, it is very difficult for, say, the Roman Catholic Establishment to maintain its

grasp upon a single interpretation of truth. But it has also been said that the distinguishing mark of many of the Utopians of the 19th century was the wish to bring their transcendent Ideals down from their "spiritual" kingdoms and give them a physical reality. This was an attempt to establish relations between the two sorts of reality—to infuse the practical with the goods of the spirit, to establish *what ought to be* in the midst of what was. This way of looking at the universe is a peculiar hybrid. It is neither world-affirming, like the materialist viewpoint, nor world-rejecting, like the Gnostic or the ascetic. It sees in the world a limited virtue, which it possesses in the degree in which it resembles the Ideal. This method of perception is analagous to the method of the Platonic Tradition; and one modern version is known as Symbolism.

In discussing the Paris occultists of the 1890s, mention was made of the Symbolist poets. Their own statement of their creed explains something of this world-view. For many it was associated with the occult Traditions. "Religions, Myths, Traditions, Philosophies, are the most obvious manifestations of the Absolute toward us . . ." A modern commentator states bluntly that Symbolism is "an attempt to recover *Traditional doctrine.*" But divested of its myths and legends, what did this mean for the poem? A Symbolist poem, wrote Raynaud, was designed to produce an aesthetic emotion—that is, a vision of the Beautiful. The form taken by the poem would therefore be a reflection of the Ideal of Beauty. This is the same theory on which the Utopian builds his Ideal State. Saint-Pol-Roux, for a short time a member of Péladan's *Rose-Croix,* makes the distinction between the Symbolist version of reality and that of the Naturalists. The Naturalists, he writes, have been counting grains of sand on the sea shore: the Symbolists will rejoice in the beauty of the sand itself, and try to see through it to the Ideal of Beauty beyond. A present-day magician expresses his use of symbols in something of the same terms. A symbol is "a practical link between objective and subjective existence." It is automatically assumed that whatever

ultimate reality the poet or magician thinks he sees beyond objects perceptible to his senses, is "objective," "the Absolute," "the Ideal." Of this, there is no guarantee at all. Gustave Kahn records great difficulty in persuading critics that there was a huge variety of symbols, that each poet would choose different symbols, that he and his friends would not necessarily employ the same symbols as Péladan.[53] Neither in the political world does the Idealistic point of view guarantee to its possessors identical conclusions. There are doctrinal squabbles among adepts of the secular faiths as there are among quarrelling religions, and as there were among Symbolist coteries.

The danger, for those who claim to see through the accidents of physical reality, is that the universe they discover beyond may turn out to be an exclusively personal construction. The recognition of this possibility might create a condition of acute anxiety. As it is often fear itself which has driven the proponents of the higher irrationalism from the terrors implicit in the materialist interpretation of life, such an admission is at all costs to be avoided. The most satisfactory way of killing such suspicions is to persuade others to share in one's belief. Best of all is to acquire social and political influence in order to assert a personal interpretation of the truth as having universal validity.[54] If sufficient numbers of mankind can be persuaded to share in the most nebulous dream, that dream becomes real.

Out of such a mixture of the material and the ideal came the view of reality which challenged the materialist Establishment in the later years of the 19th century, and burst through to prominence after the First World War. The historical development which I have called the flight from reason was then continued in a second phase: the battle between various forms of secular religion and the rearguard of Rationalism for possession of reality.

But the fundamental problem still remained. Underneath the spiritual and intellectual agonies of the 19th century was the old bogeyman Death. This was the final question to which Rationalism demanded an answer and recoil-

ed, shuddering, from the prospect. The choice was clear: to accept the implications of the purely materialist view, or to adopt an irrationalist interpretation of life. Arthur Symons saw the latter as the only way out of the trap, although he recognized the various escape mechanisms adopted by humanity for what they were.

> And so there is a great, silent conspiracy between us to forget death . . . but, vaguely conscious of that great suspense in which we live, we find our escape from its sterile, annihilating reality in many dreams, in religion, passion, art; each a forgetfulness, each a symbol of creation . . .[55]

Yet we should beware of castigating those who rejected the materialist viewpoint as unsatisfactory. They were not by any means all cowards, flying in the face of reality. They had their own reality, that of mysticism and magic, of the coming of the Lord in his Glory, of "the strange wild district beyond the barriers of sense."[56] To admit that there may be forces beyond one's material perceptions, principalities and powers of unguessable natures, requires a courage of its own. It is no more unjustifiable to foist on others an interpretation of the universe which requires the existence of elves and goblins than it is to enforce the acceptance of Marxism as a secular religion. The material reality and the immaterial reality are still battling for the crown.

After so much criticism of the irrationalists it is only fair to allow one of the most distinguished the final word. W. B. Yeats originally directed his taunt at the Scots, whom he claimed had "soured the disposition of their Ghosts and Faeries." But it might stand as the challenge of the Irrationalists to their Rational opponents:

> You—you will make no terms with the spirits of fire and earth and air and water. You have made the darkness your enemy. We—we exchange civilities with the world beyond.[57]

1. Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*, p. 15.
2. Heer, *Intellectual History*, p. 2.

3. A.E., *The Living Torch* (ed. Monk Gibbon, London, 1937), p. 183. Note the same use by Suzucki of the expression "artist in life."

4. Lewis Spence, *Freedom for Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1927), p. 41.

5. See Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London, 1960).

6. W. E. Muhlmann, *Chiliasmus und Nativismus* (Berlin, 1961), p.383.

7. Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (tr. R. F. C. Hill, London, 1949). For the prophetic element in Marxism, see pp. 100 ff.

8. Erdan, *La France mystique*, vol. II, pp. 260-61.

9. Erdan, *La France mystique*, p. 293.

10. See Sebastian Charlety, *Histoire du Saint-Simonianisme* (2nd edition, Paris, 1931).

11. Drefus, *Weill*, p. 48. J. L. Talmon notes in *Political Messianism* (London, 1960), pp. 77 ff., the prominent part played by Jewish elements in the Saint-Simonian movement, and that Saint-Simon himself came under the influence of Jewish thought.

12. Viatte, *Victor Hugo*, pp. 61-5.

13. Ujejski, "Uberblick," p. 29.

14. Braun, *Aperçu de Wronski*, p. 17.

15. Fr. Wilhelm Carové, *Der Messianismus, die neuen Templer und einige andere merkwurdige Erscheinungen . . . in Frankreich* (Leipzig, 1834), pp. 191-4. The letter, printed pp. 191-3, is dated 26 August 1830. Wronski's flirtation does not seem to have lasted long.

16. Viatte, *Victor Hugo*, p. 68.

17. Goddard, *Studies in New England Transcendentalism*, p. 39.

18. Viatte, *Victor Hugo*, p. 73.

19. Viatte, *Victor Hugo*, pp. 122, 133.

20. Erdan, *La France mystique*, vol. II, pp. 166, 172. Napoleon was destined to remain a woman for 86 years.

21. Fabre des Essarts, Preface to Dismier, *Philosophie positive de '89*, p. vii.

22. Ujejski, "Uberblick," p. 25.

23. Szpotanski, *Mickiewicz*, p. 53.

24. Goddard, *Studies in Transcendentalism*, pp. 155-6.

25. Erdan, *La France mystique*, vol. II, pp. 144-56.

26. On Cabet, see Erdan, *La France mystique*, pp. 173 ff., and M. L. Berneri, *Journey through Utopia* (London, 1950), pp. 219-35.

27. Lévi, *History of Magic*, p. 241.

28. Baborka, *H.P.B.*, p. 24. A tenement in which H.P.B. was living just before she met Olcott is said to have been an "experiment in cooperative living" begun by some forty women workers (p. 30).

29. R. V. Hine, *California's Utopian Colonies* (New Haven and London, 1966), pp. 33 ff.

30. G. K. Nelson, *Spiritualism*, pp. 18-20.

31. Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 5.

32. Joseph Maréchal, S. J., *Studies in the Psychology of the Mystics*, tr. A. Thorold (London, 1927), p. 303.

33. Leon, Blanchet, *Campanella* (Paris, 1920), pp. 19-41.

34. D. P. Walker, *Magic*, p. 236.

35. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. II, p. 293.

36. E. R. Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society* (London, 1963, 3rd printing of 1918 edition), p. 26.

37. W. Knight, *Memorials of Thomas Davidson* (London, 1907), pp. 110-17. Davidson was a visionary of apocalyptic bent. He once wrote in a letter, "The hosts of Ahura-Mazda are still fighting, and woe to us if we do not join them! . . . The sons of Ahura-Mazda laugh forever and there is no uneasiness in their laughter. Their laugh is the beauty of the universe." (p. 53.)

38. Pease, *Fabian Society*, pp. 18-25, 33-4, 36.

39. Edith Lees (Mrs. Havelock Ellis), *Attainment* (London, 1909), pp. 180-81 and pp. 265-83. Pease, *Fabian Society*, pp. 35-6. King, *Ritual Magic*, p. 186, note 2. Eileen J. Garrett, *Many Voices* (London, 1969), pp. 58-9.

40. Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams* (London, 1916), pp. 251-2. Garrett, *Many Voices*, pp. 45-6; and also her *My Life as a Search for the Meaning of Mediumship* (London, 1939), pp. 118-20. Bernard Shaw, Preface to S. Winsten, *Salt and His Circle* (London, 1951). Philip Henderson, *William Morris* (London, 1967), p. 247.

41. *Manifesto of the Golden Age* (undated but unlikely to be later than 1905).

42. Henry Salt, *Seventy Years among Savages* (London, 1921), p. 123.

43. E. Westacott, *A Century of Vivisection and Anti-Vivisection* (Ashingdon, Essex, 1919), p. 132. The Anti-Vivisection movement can really be said to have begun with the petition organized by Frances Power Cobb (1822-1904) in 1875,

and the resultant Vivisection Act of the next year. On the Committee of the Society for the Abolition of Vivisection were Vaughan of Harrow, Lord Shaftesbury, Cardinal Manning, the Archbishop of York, and a long list of notables.

44. Carpenter, *Days and Dreams*, p. 244. Maitland, *Anna Kingsford*, vol. I, pp. 258 ff.

45. Maitland, *Anna Kingsford*, vol. II, pp. 246-55, 268 and pp. 270 ff.

46. Westacott, *Vivisection*, p. 641.

47. Hine, *Utopian Colonies*, pp. 39 ff.

48. *The Irish Theosophist* (1893), vol. I, no. 8, p. 84.

49. See David Graham Pole, *War Letters and Autobiography* (Cheltenham and London, 1961), *Autobiography*, pp. 169 ff.

50. See *The Vegetarian* for 1891, 7 February, 14 March, 20 June. Christy, *Orient in Transcendentalism*, p. 266. Coincidentally, but indicative of the strong mutual interest which the Progressive Underground had—and continue to have—in one another, it was Henry Salt who first discovered this. On del Vasto, see Marianne Kohler, *A l'Ecole de Sagesse* (Paris, 1961), pp. 81 ff.

51. G. Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic, *The Anarchist Prince* (London, 1950), pp. 210-28. The *V Narod* (to the People) movement. James Mavor, *My Windows on the Street of the World* (London, 1923), p. 160. *The Interpreter* (Organ of the Edinburgh Summer Meeting), no. XXIV (29 August 1896); no. II (4 August 1891).

52. Carpenter, *Days and Dreams*, p. 240.

53. Quoted, Guy Michaud, *La doctrine symboliste, Documents* (Paris, 1947), pp. 9, 26; pp. 84-5, quoting E. Raynaud, in *Le Décadent* (1 March 1888); p. 62, quoting Saint-Pol-Roux in *Réponse à une enquête de J. Huret* (1891). W. G. Gray, *Magical Ritual Methods* (Toddington, Glos., 1969), p. 35. Kahn, *Symbolistes*, p. 58.

54. Cf. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London, 1967), p. 37: "... power in society includes the power to determine decisive socialization processes, and therefore, the power to *produce* reality."

55. Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (London, 1899), p. 172.

56. Evelyn Underhill, *The Column of Dust* (London, 1909), p. 21.

57. W. B. Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight* (London, 1893), p. 196.

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